

THE PRESENT CRISIS IN RELIGION +

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THE PRESENT CRISIS IN RELIGION

THE REV. W. E. ORCHARD, D.D. (Lond.)



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THE PRESENT CRISIS IN RELIGION

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TO
MY GENERATION

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THE PRESENT CRISIS
IN RELIGION

I

THE PRESENT CONDITION OF RELIGION

THERE is no word in our language more overworked at present than the word “crisis”; and to affirm that there is a crisis in religion is like the crying of “wolf” in the parable; it has already reached a stage of repetition where no one is likely to be alarmed. If, therefore, anyone attempts an analysis of the present condition of religion in order to vindicate the application of such a term as “crisis” to the existing situation, there will be many who will at once raise the objection that these cries of alarm have been constantly voiced in the past, which time has only proved to be false. This may be at once acknowledged; and indeed some instructive examples of this mistake may be recalled.

It was in the middle of the twelfth century that Bernard of Cluny wrote

The world is very evil;
The times are waxing late;
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate.

And yet not only did the Church survive, but there followed soon after the great revival of the thirteenth century, exemplified in the rise of the Franciscan and Dominican orders. A more recent example, and one more particularly concerning our own country, is to be found in the oft-quoted words from the Advertisement prefixed to Butler's "Analogy," published in 1726, in which he says, "It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discerned to be fictitious." That others shared the Bishop's opinion is seen from the dictum of Warburton, speaking in the same period: "I have lived to see that final crisis, when religion hath lost its hold on the minds of the people."¹ And yet this deplored condition of things was shortly to be followed by the Evangelical Revival and the rise of Methodism. To come still nearer to our own times, and restricting our concern to the Established Church, we may recall the famous words of Dr. Arnold, "The Church, as it now stands, no human power can save."² This again was just before the Tractarian Movement, which, however it may be judged, has changed the face of our National Church, and poured new life into all its sections.

¹ Quoted by Dr. Angus in his short life of Butler, introducing "The Analogy."

² "The Oxford Movement," S. L. Ollard, p. 7 (quoted from Stanley's life of Arnold).

These recollections of former estimates cannot however be fairly used to suppress the judgment that once again we are faced with a grave crisis in the state of religion, not only in this country, but all over Christendom, and indeed throughout the world. That there was a recovery soon after each of the times that were judged so critical does not prove that they were not critical. The crisis was dispelled and turned to advantage just because there were great souls who discerned the issues, raised the alarm and called for a new movement of repentance and faith. Religion had been severely depleted of power and appeal by unworthy exemplars, hostile attacks and declining fervour; and it was these conditions which were used to stress the call to renewed fidelity, more courageous defence, and increased devotion, and so turned the tide and stayed what otherwise might have become a complete collapse of organized religion and an almost entire disappearance of faith. It is with a similar hope that this present survey is undertaken: namely, that it may not only rouse professing Christians to a new defence and commendation of their faith, but persuade all serious-minded persons to a reconsideration of the claims of religion, in order that what is believed to be a crisis in the history of mankind may be surmounted, and once more a way made open for a genuine advance in humanitarianism, idealism and faith.

There may, however, be those who refuse to face the present existing conditions, or to admit their serious nature, on the somewhat cynical excuse that Christianity has always been judged to be in a critical state. This again may be acknowledged to be true. If a Scriptural writer is to be granted any judgment, not to say inspiration, a crisis was felt to be approaching just before the apostolic age had passed away. St. John is credited with writing: "It is the last hour: and as ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour."⁸ The interpretation that this saying leaves open, since it proved not to be literally "the last hour," is that there has always been a crisis in the history of humanity since Christianity came into the world. Its hold upon the world has always been empirically precarious; its decline and defeat have only been fended off with great difficulty again and again; it is left for every generation to fight the great battle of faith afresh; no continuance of an organization, no momentum of custom, no strength of tradition is of itself sufficient to continue Christianity in a vital and victorious condition. And no more than any other can our age claim exemption from the heroic strife and unceasing vigilance which are necessary if religion is going to be maintained and the faith handed on.

⁸ I John ii. 18.

That religion should have such a precarious hold on humanity, or that the Christian faith should be in such constant peril of defeat may seem to some impossible presuppositions, and more encouraging reflections will be sought either in the fact that humanity has in the main always been religious, or in the conviction that the Christian faith, or any faith that is worthy of the name, must include the belief that victory will finally remain with goodness and with God.

It must suffice to point out that even if we have other grounds for an absolute assurance concerning the final victory of the Christian faith, there are many disquieting references, especially in the New Testament, there, surprisingly enough, apparently less optimistic than the Old, which seem to regard this as an open question, and the future of the faith as a real human option. It seems possible to adduce from the petition in The Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," that the coming of the Kingdom is possible, or we should not have been asked to pray for it; but also that it is not inevitable, for then there would be no need to pray for it. There is also Christ's own question: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find the faith on the earth?"⁴ which He Himself left unanswered. But even if these and other references, which could be multiplied, do not leave open the possibility that religion might vanish

⁴ St. Luke xviii. 8. (R. V. marg.)

and the Christian faith disappear (for there are certainly texts which might be quoted to the contrary), yet it is not inconceivable, if the present tendencies go far enough, that in a few generations, although a remnant may remain true to the faith, religion should cease to have any power over the majority of mankind, and the Christian faith have to persist for a time, rather as a seed buried in the ground, no doubt to spring up again, but perhaps for a long period forgotten and fruitless.

In this survey we must take account of those persons who declare that they would gladly see religion vanish from the minds of men, and who affirm that until it does mankind will not attain perfect freedom or make unhindered progress. Their position must be examined at some length later on, for although they may be few, their opinion is influential; but for our present purpose it only adds to the testimony that the possibility of such a fate overtaking religion is not unthinkable, and it is one of the indications that things are moving in that direction.

We may therefore now perhaps take it for granted that unwillingness to consider a condition that is alleged to be critical will be no longer maintained on the ground that it is unthinkable or impossible. Further, a survey of the present state of religion may now be undertaken without making comparisons with the past

in order to excuse unconcern, or pleading that there can be no need for effort, because these prove that there is no cause for alarm. If the critical state of religion is to be discerned, it has to be remembered that the question is not whether things are better than they have been at some time or other in the past, but whether they are adequate to the present need of humanity. If this country were enduring a world-wide blockade maintained by hostile air-craft, which was gradually reducing the inhabitants to starvation, it would be of little value to point out that at one time we could produce all the food we needed, that we had survived famines before, and had emerged triumphant from the blockade attempted by submarines in the last war. With our population increased by millions, our decreased home production, and a new form of menace, reference to past survivals and recoveries might encourage us to resist to the uttermost, but they would not guarantee victory, and still less would it be argued that no new methods need be sought for defeating the enemy and no effort made to find new sources of supply. It is something similar that seems to constitute the present crisis in religion; our religion is certainly not adequate to the demands that are being made upon it, whether we have in mind the realms of international, social or personal need; for while religion is being subjected to attacks that are directed against its innermost citadel of

personal experience, religious observance and individual devotion are certainly not manufacturing enough religion to provide for the multitude.

These are the superficial conditions that demand a more careful examination, which must be equally undertaken, even if the diagnosis is to be discounted that the present state of religion is critical for the persistence of faith and the health of humanity.

The first of the conditions that may be taken to illustrate the present state of religion is that which is registered in the public observance of religion. Although in recent decades there have been censuses of Church attendance, exact statistical comparison with previous generations is not possible; but without loading these pages with figures whose very significance might only be disputed, it may be taken to be beyond discussion that within the last twenty years there has been a considerable decline in the attendance at public worship. So much is this realized by denominational authorities that a recent proposal for a further census was strongly deprecated on the ground that it would only prove gravely discouraging. With the exception of a few outstanding examples to the contrary, in many places huge chapels and large churches present depressing monuments of glories departed, and make the task of filling them a desperate venture. This phenomenon is not to be explained, as it could be in the case of the large

parish churches of East Anglia, by the decline of the population. There has been a decline in the rural population everywhere in England; but in the urban population there has been no decline, but almost everywhere an increase. It is only the character of the population that has changed, but the change seems always to make for a decline in Church attendance. The few outstanding exceptions are those historic chapels which have managed to secure an unbroken succession of unusual preachers, and the large audiences which can be gathered into the great central missions which now represent the "forward policy" of the Methodists. Whether this policy is likely to prove a true and permanent success is questioned amongst Methodists themselves, but it is clear that their success depends upon a building and a type of service which designedly conceal any purpose of worship. There is evidence that some of the great Anglican churches built a generation ago in crowded areas to provide a high type of ritualistic service for the poor are now failing to attract the same numbers, while the ordinary parish churches, whether in town or country, are only rarely to be found filled. A recent survey of conditions in South London in which every kind of church was visited makes most depressing reading.⁵ The exception there recorded in

⁵ See articles under the title of "Where Denominations Clash," in "The Christian World," for Nov. 10 and 17, 1927.

favour of Roman Catholic places of worship counts for little when it is remembered that these are few and far between, draw from a large area, are often small, and are recruited under the belief that attendance is of grave obligation. The power of a few preachers to attract good audiences makes little mark on the general conditions, for there is an unusual dearth of powerful preachers, and even some of these confess to discerning clear evidence of their waning popularity. The conclusion is, that however favourably conditions may compare with much earlier times, or, say, in the first half of the eighteenth century, there has recently been a most serious decline in Church attendance in this country.

The decline appears to date from the time when the Evangelical Revival displayed what seems to have been its last sign of power, somewhere in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This was practically coincident with the loss of novelty in the ritualistic movement. Since that time the gradual diminution in Church attendance has continued, save for a brief period of improvement during the War, since when the downward tendency has been resumed with noticeable acceleration.

The question is what this decline in public worship signifies as an index to the state of religion. From what statistics are available and from general observation,

that this decline is serious cannot be doubted; but whether it has an equally serious bearing on the state of religion is disputed. Most of the denominations in this country publish figures concerning their membership which are more valuable. They indicate in the main that, apart from the numbers of Sunday School scholars and teachers, where there is a great decrease, most of the denominations are just holding their own; but it must be remembered that this makes a poor comparison with the growth of population; and anyhow it does nothing to counter the evidence as to general churchgoing. This stable membership must itself now be recognized as compatible with less frequent and regular attendance. Membership numbers and money contributions may be kept up for some time yet; but the general decline in churchgoing, and especially the decline in the numbers of Sunday School children, must soon have a manifest effect on Church membership; for the sources from which recruits are to be expected are being cut off.

It is however frequently urged that church attendance is no adequate indication of the actual condition of religion. That may be perfectly true; but it is not certain that this fact tells in the direction which it is generally affirmed as supporting. We shall have to consider later what is the condition of the religion of the people who do attend church; at the moment we have

to try to discern what is the religious condition of the people who do not. This is necessarily a difficult matter, and no one is really competent to be very dogmatic about it. The late Mr. Henry W. Massingham, editor of "The Nation," once affirmed that some people were too good Christians to go to church. This somewhat caustic and perhaps not too seriously meant judgment nevertheless implied that the Churches were not sufficiently Christian, and that this accounted for the large defection which he also agreed was taking place. It may be admitted that the services, say, in a high Anglican or Roman Church would seem to a certain type of evangelical Christian not Christian at all, but idolatrous and pagan; while to other fervent temperaments the ordinary church or chapel service would seem formal and unreal; but the persons who felt these objections most acutely would surely be found supporting most energetically services of some different order which they preferred. It may be a fact that a great many idealists have in recent years become detached from Church attendance by what they consider the apathetic concern of the Churches towards the social condition of the masses, or their acquiescence in and even defence of our present economic system, which results in such inequalities and miserable poverty; and to these must now be added many who declare they gave up Church attendance owing to the general attitude of

apology, sanction, or support given to war during the great conflict of 1914-18. It is difficult to be certain how far these reasons for defection were sincere, or how widespread their effects have been. They may have only provided some with an excuse which they welcomed; but that they have had a further lowering effect on merely half-hearted loyalties, and have provided those who wanted it with another objection to churchgoing cannot be doubted.

It is to be feared, however, that wherever, and for whatever reason, this loosening of custom has taken place, personal conviction and private devotion must have suffered correspondingly. The Churches might be all that was alleged of them in formality, unreality, or even hypocrisy, but where that was deeply felt there would surely be an effort made to find some other form of worship and create other opportunities for religious fellowship. Of this, however, there is practically no evidence. The Society of Friends has not registered any noticeable increase of members in recent years; the Ethical Society laments its own unprogressing membership; there has arisen no Socialistic Church. There are one or two Labour Churches in this country, but there is no movement of any size or significance to be recorded in that direction. It is of course frequently affirmed that there is as much religion outside the Churches as inside; strictly speaking, there is no more

accurate means of proving than of disproving this statement. It might even be despondently replied that even if it were true this would not warrant any optimism. Moreover, it must be agreed that this non-churchgoing religion departs seriously from the historic form; for apparently it neither craves corporate expression nor feels the need for corporate inspiration; it must therefore be either much weaker or much stronger than the religion of the past. If it is weaker, then it is probably already in process of vanishing away, and this, almost certainly, for lack of the common worship that it has forsaken: if it is stronger, it is presumably employing a more intense private devotion to make up for what it loses for lack of corporate devotion.

In the past religion has been predominantly social, and its inevitable expression has been common worship. Originally the religious subject seems to have been the tribe or race; and although these have been replaced even in Old Testament times, by the individual soul, yet in the historic type of Christianity it is the Church as a whole which is conceived as the subject of redemption and the actual offerer of worship. At the Reformation, with its consequent break-up of the Church idea, there was naturally a reaction towards an individualistic basis in religious experience, and this tendency was re-emphasized by the Evangelical Revival. Are we then simply seeing religion advance

farther in this direction, and is it to be regarded as a natural and healthy development; or are latent tendencies now manifesting themselves which must eventually destroy all religion? These are questions which must receive further consideration; but our immediate concern is whether this non-churchgoing religion is actually a vital and reproductive type. If it is really of this nature it is obvious that it must manifest three characteristics: it must be peculiarly clear in its convictions, it must be assiduous in study and prayer, it must be highly sensitive to the need of personal evangelism; all these need to be intensified where common expression and organized responsibility have been abandoned. What indications are there that in the absence of corporate expression an intensely personal religion is nevertheless being maintained? Of direct evidence there is simply none; observation and inquiry can only collect evidence to the contrary. Family worship is rare everywhere; whether private prayer is being kept up can only be ascertained through intimate contact, but its abandonment is often confessed; the evidence available from our schools seems conclusive that children are receiving almost no religious instruction in their homes. Whatever be the changes that are taking place in established customs, and despite the allegation that religion is only changing its expression, the general conclusions obtainable from history and arguable from the nature

of the case, that corporate expression and personal religion are interdependent, are therefore amply confirmed, and we can only expect that where religion loses its outward expression, it will not long maintain its inner experience, and will certainly not hand it on to the next generation.

Is any different verdict to be gathered from the religious discussions which have now become so frequent a feature of our popular Press? For this is often alleged as evidence that the people are still profoundly interested in religion. It is now an old-standing prophecy that the Press is destined to take the place of the Pulpit. Have we not in this modern and popular phenomenon an indication not only that this prophecy is being fulfilled, but that the transference is being accomplished without any serious loss in religious concern or instructional efficiency? To answer this question with certainty it would be necessary, first of all, to be assured that these newspaper ventures into religion are more than advertisement stunts, carefully initiated and worked up by the management. Even then it might be argued that this would only confirm the idea that religion is a subject which still interests a wide public. But there remains the suspicion which questions whether those who manage our newspapers really know what the public wants. No doubt the advertisement of a series of articles on religious problems may be relied

upon to bring in a number of extra readers from the more religiously inclined; but if the prevailing political tenets of our newspapers are contrasted with the registration of opinion in a General Election, it is bound to be questioned whether our newspaper managers know anything intimately about the public they cater for; at least they do not seem able to influence personal decision. Moreover, it may be questioned whether the angle of approach which a newspaper must employ in religious matters is likely to produce religious conviction, or whether the hesitating and tentative attitude which is the predominant tendency and the only allowable conclusion of such newspaper articles is not rather an indication of how vague and weak the religious interest has become, when this is its preferred medium of inquiry and method of instruction.⁶ It must also be doubtful what indication of general feeling is manifested by those who write letters to the papers; and on this subject the correspondence provoked by a series of articles on religious questions only too amply confirm the wide existence of either eccentric opinion or general confusion.

It is even more doubtful what exact index of the state of religion is to be gathered from the irreligious-

⁶ The Rev. Ronald Knox, whose experience as a journalist should complement his judgment as a priest, finds little evidence of a healthy religious interest in this newspaper religion. See "The Belief of Catholics," chap. I.

ness of the popular novel. There are still a few novels being written that are frankly propagandist of orthodox religion, of unorthodox religion, or of irreligion, but it is the subject of frequent remark that the average novel simply treats religion as non-existent or entirely irrelevant to life. This is symptomatic not only of the more frivolous or railway-bookstall type of novel, but of those writers who more seriously and successfully strive to depict ordinary life, and that with great minuteness; religion receives almost no mention in their voluminous productions, because they find no place for it in the lives they portray; yet they turn for their models to the average man and to realism for their inspiration.⁷ The ordinary drama tells much the same story, save when it introduces a parson to provide a never-failing element of farce, or when it uses the term God, usually as an exclamation over some quite trifling event. We should therefore gather from these sources that religion hardly exists in normal life, is kept so secret that the novelist is unaware of it, and even the theatre dare not pry into it, or, more likely, is to be found only in abnormal circles and practised only by a few people.

What is generally involved in the frequent affirmation about the healthiness of that religion which is

⁷ This symptom is particularly noticeable in the microscopic treatment of mediocrity to which such writers as Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells have devoted their admitted talent for life-like creations.

supposed to exist apart from ecclesiastical attachment does not really provide any evidence about religion; for it is only the expression of a conviction that people are just as ethically upright and socially useful without theological convictions or religious profession. That raises a question which demands and must have further consideration, but itself it is only evidence that religion as such is in a grave condition when it can be widely held that it is able to be dispensed with and yet not make much difference to personal and social ethics.

Our general conclusion concerning the state of religion outside the Church can only be that while there may be a welcome clinging to such remnants of faith as a belief in a God of some kind, the retention of reverence for a Christ, however reduced, and the conviction that goodness should be striven after, whether or not this life be all there is, however wistfully desirous for greater certainties, it is not in the way of attaining them, but rather threatens to develop into a general agnosticism on all such subjects. While blatant atheism is certainly less evident, there are large areas in modern thought where there is no belief in the existence of anything supernatural or superhuman, and a still vaster area where there is even no interest in such questions as to whether there is anything above humanity or beyond this life. For an ever-increasing majority of people there seems no pressing problem save beyond what may be

extracted from this life for their own immediate enjoyment.

With great masses of our people religion is not a living issue: they are not interested in it, and they see no reason why they should be. Where there is anything more approximately religious, it is either so vague or so chaotic that it cannot be organized, and provides no impulse for further exploration. Between the outer ring of the non-religious and the regular adherents of the Church there is a belt of those to whom religion consists mainly in a series of questions to which there exist only countless and contradictory answers; these must remain matters of individual opinion, preference or taste, and cannot therefore be brought to any test of decision or agreement. There may be another belt, still farther in, which consists of impatient idealists who have been disappointed, or inquiring spirits who have been put off by the social, ethical and intellectual inadequacy of one or other or of all the Churches. But although they may be persons worthy of consideration and are souls worth winning, so far as our present inquiry is concerned they voice a complaint out of all proportion to their number and position. For it is evident that the depletion of the ranks of the Church by persons of this character is contributing no corresponding accession to the living army of social and intellectual enthusiasts; humanity has gained nothing from the Church's loss; the only dis-

cernible growth is in the mass of the thoughtless, the pleasure-seeking, the money-hunting and the selfishly absorbed, who present just as great a problem to the reformer and the idealist as to the religious propagandist. It is at length beginning to be realized that the Church is a dwindling community in an environment of, not pagan so much as secularized humanity; for paganism was a state of mind that was profoundly religious, believing itself to be surrounded on every side by divine powers demanding reverent recognition. The fear of a return to superstition or idolatry, which some religious reformers seem to feel has not yet been sufficiently inhibited in popular Christianity, is really remote; much more likely is a reaction to paganism as a result of the rejection of Christianity, the evidence for which may be found in some of the less respectable and more irrational of the cults. For while superstition will sometimes become a parasitic growth upon religion, and like lichen on a tree, threaten to kill it, there is now hardly enough religion for superstition to fasten upon. Some modernist theologians, however, are distressed at the implicit polytheism which they detect in popular notions of the Trinity, but, on the whole, the world is in little danger of polytheism: the general evolution of popular religion looks rather as if the gods had been reduced not to a clearly conceived unity, but to a vanishing-point.

The undoubted drift from churchgoing habits, serious as its effect must be, would present a less serious aspect if it only meant a falling off of those who had gone to church merely from social convention or thoughtless custom; for the attendance of such persons must have contributed largely to the charge of insincerity which has been so frequently brought against Christian profession, and to the ineffectiveness complained of in the Church. This defection might then only have left a more compact, convinced and zealous group, whose attachment to the Church would constitute something much more like a disciplined and efficient army than the previous constituency of doubtfully faithful recruits and mere camp followers. Such a loyal and earnest army would then be all the more impressive as an example of Christian character, and provide a striking force for evangelistic enterprise. The present falling away from the Church could then be regarded as no more regrettable than the testing process which Gideon ruthlessly applied to his followers.⁸ It is to be feared, however, that the faithful remnant hardly corresponds to anything like a well-disciplined, heroic or effective force for commending Christianity to the world, whether by example or exhortation. There seems only too great evidence that if the present drift from religion has deprived the Church of many who were an em-

⁸ Judges vii. 1-7.

barrassment if not a shame, it has left the Church only in the possession of mediocrity, employing that term in no ethical or religious disparagement. Those who remain, whether to worship God or to serve the Church, seem peculiarly undistinguished. We may be thankful that they are not great sinners, but neither do they provide material from which great saints are usually made. They belong dispositionally and educationally, as well as economically, prevailing to the middle classes. We are not forgetful that even in apostolic times it was admitted that not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called, but that God chose the weak, and base, and the nobodies to confound the wise and change the world.⁹ But in those apostolic times, and even at later times, when the Church often seemed to have departed from apostolic faithfulness and fervour, it retained the power of manufacturing characters which became distinguished for power, learning and leadership beyond anything the world could produce. At its worst the Church was a match for the world: it seems altogether different at the present hour. There are doubtless not a few being rescued from degradation, bondage and misery by the more evangelistic of the Church agencies; but it is admittedly ill equipped to withstand the intellectual, energetic, and statesmanlike persons that are now all too often to be found num-

⁹ Corinthians i. 27.

bered among the forces that must be counted as hostile to religion.

It is perhaps a symptomatic phenomenon that it is the economically middle classes who form the main support of the Church to-day. The modern rich, composed of wealthy manufacturers, or financial magnates, have few social instincts; in that respect they are worse than the landed rich of a previous time; but they have many social engagements, and often many social antipathies, which keep them as a class from any Church attachment; while it is notorious that the rebellious dependents, in the persons of their organized employees, are also conspicuously and even vociferously alienated from the Church. The Church cannot effectively moderate the more or less sustained hostility, or mediate in the frequent outbreaks of strife now so common between employers and employed; and, for one reason, because neither party is found in large numbers joining in the Church's worship or accepting the Church's faith. From the point of view of numbers, as well as for other reasons the Church could have better afforded the defection of its few remaining wealthy patrons than the almost wholesale alienation of the class-conscious organized workers.

Similarly in our generation there is a noticeable absence from our Churches of the intellectuals. Our intellectuals are, with a few all the more conspicuous

exceptions, non-Christian or anti-Christian. For whatever reason the defection of the artistic class is equally marked. Naturally the priesthood, clergy or ministry must reproduce the complexion of the ranks from which it is recruited, and while the standard of moral integrity, devotion to duty, and strenuous effort was probably never higher, the official leaders and representatives of the Church are indisputably lacking in intellectual ability, adventurous activity or outstanding personality. The few religious persons who can command the attraction of the outside world are unfortunately generally distinguished for their attacks on orthodoxy, their criticism of the organized Church, or the eccentricity of their opinions. And while in devotion and piety the rank and file may be unusually sincere, even the Church that deliberately continues the practice of canonization cannot produce many successful candidates from this generation.

It is a matter of now widespread lament that the depleted ranks of professing Christians are broken up and rendered still more ineffective by their own divisions. The shrinking of the popular adherence to any of the denominations, and the growth of a world hostile, dissatisfied or indifferent, has only served to emphasize more than ever the sheer futility of a divided Christendom. Strength is being wasted in rivalry and overlapping between Protestant denominations: while the dis-

tracting controversy between Protestant and Catholic has only been further advertised, and seems as intractable as ever, as a result of the efforts that have been made to bring about a better understanding and call a truce to strife. Denominational divisions, even when they are slight, take so long to heal; and even the suggestion that Protestants and Catholics might be reconciled neither side will tolerate.

Deeper than the denominational divisions, which, in their effect on the world, mostly make only for waste and inefficiency, is the disagreement as to the presentation of the Christian faith to the world. This division follows fairly closely the distinction between Protestant and Catholic, but concerns something much more important than organization, order or sacraments: not only the actual content, but the very nature of faith. We have on the one side divergent presentations which mostly conceal their disagreements (save where here and there "Fundamentalism" has raised somewhat similar issues) by remaining distressingly vague, substituting sentiment for thought, and proclaiming a faith which is almost devoid of objectivity; while on the other hand we have a rigidly defined statement of ecclesiastical claims which actually appear to many religiously disposed persons as only a mechanical substitute for religion, not only having nothing to do with faith at all, but making for a complete obscuration of

faith. The alternative expositions of Christianity offered to the world are like either a machine without steam, or hot air without a machine: either dry bones, or a deliquescent jelly without substance and possessing no sustenance value.

It will have been noticed that this attempted estimate of the state of religion has been drawn from the conditions observed and reported of our own country, and more immediately of England. Inquiry concerning Scotland and Wales, however, only shows that similar conditions are fast developing there, England apparently only representing a more advanced state of a general tendency; indeed the change in Scotland, once so noted for "Sabbath-observance," has become in recent years most marked, and is regarded by many as alarming; it is estimated that one-fifth or more of the adult population has no Church connection.¹⁰ These observations also agree closely with the conditions reported of the United States: there, in some of the denominations, the Sunday evening service has been openly abandoned, and it is estimated that only 48 per cent. of the people belong to any Church. In both these cases the proportion is probably considerably higher than that of England.

¹⁰ See article by Principal Alex. Martin, D.D., in "The Reunion of Christendom" (Cassell).

It remains to be inquired whether this decline in church attachment is taking place only in Protestantism, against which Roman Catholicism, with its great insistence upon the spiritual obligation of Church attendance erects an effectual barrier. The Roman Church in this country reports a large and growing number of converts which is now claimed to have reached 12,000 a year; most Roman Churches will be found to be well filled at Mass. On the Continent Catholicism is credited with a considerable recovery in prestige and gain in numbers since the War; the contrast between selected Protestant and Catholic areas in Germany being distinguished by practically forsaken Churches in the former and crowded services in the latter; while in the United States only the Roman Catholic Church is making much headway. But as a counter-influence on the general condition of Western religion this distinction between the present position of Protestantism and Catholicism probably counts for little. In this country the Roman Catholic chapels are few, and most of them it takes few to fill; the majority of the quite considerable number of converts reported is almost entirely made up from those previously Protestant, and those of the most devout and earnest kind; so that the net gain to actual religious observance, public or private, is slight; and while the number of non-practising Catholics remains lamentably large, it is to be feared that the lapses wipe

out the gains. On the Continent, despite signs of revival in the attractiveness of the Catholic Church and in the observance of religion, the defection from the Church, and then the usually consequent hostility towards all religion of whole masses of the population, continues an indisputable, disquieting and symptomatic phenomenon.

The catastrophe that has overtaken the Church in Russia is cataclysmic and yet is somewhat difficult to appraise, since it is partly an almost natural reaction from a Tsar-governed and corrupt ecclesiasticism, and partly an organized attempt by a not very representative officialdom to discredit and destroy Christianity; this must naturally attract attention, coerce practice and influence opinion. Reports are conflicting and dubious, but despite the persecution and repression indignantly alleged by the Church authorities and officially denied by the Government, it seems that the Church has nevertheless managed to retain a deep affection and even to restore a more devout adherence among the masses, even if it has inevitably only won the more open hostility of those who enthusiastically welcome the new régime. But the revolution has, for the time, certainly lost "Holy" Russia this attribution from the rest of the world, and whether or no the militant atheism that characterizes the new governing classes represents anything more than a *coup d'état*, it is a manifestation of a

movement which is bitterly hostile to Christianity, and given favourable circumstances is capable of seizing power; and since it is a world-wide tendency, it cannot be too confidently traced merely to the ecclesiastical and political conditions peculiar to pre-revolutionary Russia, nor can it be guaranteed that it will not spread to other countries in time.

Those who have a Christian concern for heathendom, as well as those who profess that their religious hopes cannot be bound up with Christianity, may well demand that some note should be taken of those great religious systems which have retained the adherence of perhaps an even greater number of human beings, namely Buddhism, Hinduism and Mohammedanism. If this concern is more than curiosity, and witnesses to some kind of hope or belief that the stability or growth of these other religions may provide some compensation for the diminishing adherence of the West to Christianity, it surely itself witnesses to a curious inversion of religious values, and, as a matter of fact, it is compelled to face a disappointing situation. The revolution in China, owing not a little to the influence, direct and indirect, of Russia, has manifested violent hostility to the Christian faith, mistaken for a Western importation. In the confusion of an insurgent nationalism this need not count for much, but an equal hostility is expressed to what there is now a tendency to regard as

the unhealthy and repressive effect of Buddhism, and indeed of any religion. The disintegrating effect, not only of Western civilization, but of Western critical thought, is at length making its mark on the hitherto adamant resistance of Islam. Recent promulgations of the Turkish Government adopting Christian institutions are not to be taken as any indication of a desire to approximate to Christian culture; they may be more safely taken as examples of a secularism hostile to all religious recognition, which even so strong a combination of racialism and religion as the Turkish Empire can no longer resist. A similar disintegration of an even more passionate combination of racialism and religion is seen in Judaism, which is now likewise suffering from lapses, not only into religious indifference, but often into a peculiarly bitter atheism. The intense religious temperament of the Hindus may erect a more effectual resistance against the combination of Western rationalistic criticism and the seductive promises of our wealth-producing industrialism, but the ravages that these influences are making on Hindu piety, as well as the questioning of its mental and moral adequacy as a religion,¹¹ yields little promise that Hinduism as such will provide a sufficient barrier, not to say create a re-

¹¹ See the evidence given in "My Brother's Face," by D. G. Mukerji (Butterworth), and in "Mother India," by Catherine Mayo (Cape); this is valid for our present purposes, however much on other matters both books are open to criticism.

action, against what is obviously a world-movement away from religion.

Those opponents of religion, who see in such a movement something to be hailed as opening up a new era in human emancipation and progress, are welcome to whatever comfort they can extract from the admission these observations make concerning the present state of religion throughout the world. We shall be prepared to consider at some length later on whether there is any reason to identify religious decline with an advance of humanity towards the realization of hopes hitherto fostered by, and believed to be dependent upon faith; for the moment we are quite content to agree with the opponents of religion as to the facts, and to disagree with the complacency and even optimism professed and prevailing among our fellow Christians. It is rather with that prevailing optimism that we are more concerned, and with its apologists that we must now come to closer grips.

We are quite prepared to admit that we have been confining ourselves to the blacker elements in the present outlook, and allowing ourselves to be influenced by a pessimistic estimate; but this we have done of deliberate purpose. It is wise to look at the worst facts first: it is better to overestimate the forces against us if we want to make sure of victory. We are well aware that there are other facts; we are willing to give them equal

consideration, and we now propose to attempt some estimate of their number and weight. We have not forgotten the more informed intelligence, the more discerning worship, and the more fervent piety that now characterize many of those who remain faithful to the Church and its observances, whether Protestant or Catholic. We are aware of something of the work being done in evangelizing the masses, as well as in urging Church people to a reasonably assured, character-forming and socially responsible faith, both within Christendom and throughout heathendom. Moreover, we need no reminder of the essential virility of the Christian faith, and especially of its oft-proved power to revive and reform itself; we yield to none in our belief in the capacity for triumphant victory inherent in the Christian Gospel and resident in the Christian Church; and we desire reverently to acknowledge, along with the most convinced and optimistic, our final hope in the permanent presence and ever accessible power of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we confess as the Saviour of the world and the Redeemer of mankind, and in the inexhaustible wisdom and power of God, His God and ours, His Father and our Father. But it is all the more because of this unshakable and final faith that we dare to call attention to what we think are indisputable facts, which must be taken account of as part of our responsibility to God, our love of truth and our concern for our gener-

ation. These facts, we believe, indicate that at the present moment the battle is going hard, and desperately so, against religion, and that the Christian forces are insufficiently alive to the situation; they are ill equipped to meet it, and too disorganized to hold the ground once gained, leave alone to win the further position which must be gained if at this hour we are to hold and maintain what is vital for the victory of faith, the salvation of mankind and our hopes for the world. The hopeful facts which are generally quoted as over against those we have stressed, we recognize to be facts, but we maintain that they do not constitute anything like a cancelling counterweight on the other side, or give a sufficient guarantee that the present situation will be altered, or the actual movement that is taking place reversed. We believe this must and can be attempted within this generation, but there will be no adequate advance unless the actual situation is faced and the present crisis is widely and deeply realized; it is the call to effort, thought and prayer that lies in the facts which urges us to insist upon them. It is perfectly possible that we have overdrawn one side, been over-impressed by the dark and depressing elements, and not given sufficient weight to those that are bright and inspiring; but we believe that no one can dispute that the situation is sufficiently serious to constitute a call that every power we possess and can secure should be dedicated, that

somehow a united front must be created, and a counter-attack launched, if we are to turn back the forces that are now pressing upon the very citadel of religion, and to win the victory for the faith of the future.

The more optimistic readings of the situation with which so many comfort themselves do not really contradict our conclusions, and even if they could be given the value claimed for them, are irrelevant to the issue. When the concrete facts of the present religious situation are presented to the comfortable and optimistic they will often refer to the comparative improvement on even worse times selected from the past. This is a way of evading the call of the present which we had to notice at the outset. We can therefore now content ourselves with pointing out that these comparisons only enforce our purpose. Those evil times were overcome simply because there were souls who felt and mourned them so intensely that they inaugurated a movement of repentance and faith which reformed the Church and arrested the attention of the world. If we could only secure sufficient attention to the actual conditions prevailing now, something might be done to remedy a precarious and worsening situation. Moreover, with the development of personality, the multiplication of the interests of life and the integration of society, the religious needs of humanity are increasing, not decreasing. It is more religion that man needs, intellectual,

devotional and personal, and it is the inadequate response to this need that is forcing a crisis upon us.

Even more often than comparing the present with the past, for which, after all, more knowledge of history and wider observation are needed than are generally possessed by the slothful and complacent, minds of this temperament often bid us reassure ourselves by considering the residuum of religion that still remains when doctrinal beliefs, ecclesiastical attachments and all regular devotions have been abandoned. It is held that there is a vast amount of perhaps formless but quite effective faith which suffices to sustain a high average of personal integrity, devotion to duty and sacrifice of social ends. We are bidden to think of the human happiness that multitudes maintain among difficult circumstances and amid depressing surroundings; of the ready and radiant helpfulness that many are manifesting towards those around them; of the unrewarded and ungrudging labour that is spent in civic service. If theology is at a discount, yet our people as a whole believe in God and strive to serve Him through humanity; if they are unprepared to accept the estimate of Christ expressed in the creeds of the Church, they have a profound reverence for His Person and they strive to carry out His teaching; if they do not pray in a conscious and definite way, they have lofty aspirations, keep high ideals ever before them and

make constant endeavours towards still better things. There is no more need to contradict these assertions than there can be accurate evidence adduced in their support. It is indeed a matter for congratulation that so many retain faith in God when there is so much being written to undermine it; that so many revere Christ when so many are rebelling against all that He lived for; that so many preserve a high spirituality when so many others are grossly materialistic in their opinions and conduct. But this inchoate faith is not strong enough to pass on to others, to bequeath to the next generation, or to erect a defence against the insidious suggestions, which pour in from every side, that there is no objective reality corresponding to human faith. Reverence for the memory of Jesus may soon cease to remember not only what He claimed to be, as it already has done, but what He called upon men to do; and in a subsequent generation such a mere memory will inevitably so fade away that it must become as ineffective as if He had never existed; which has been already suggested, with no little disturbing effect. A personal moral integrity may derive its ultimate inspiration from the soundly based conviction that there is an eternal moral order and that there has been given us a divine example of human life; but when the ground of this conviction has been already surrendered or forgotten, it will find itself unarmed against the repeated asser-

tions that the only motives for personal action are the instincts which we share with the animals, and the ideals which actuate men are derived solely from the economic pressure of the social order, which it is alleged, is built up from a balance of conflicting selfish interests, and can only be maintained by the ruthless suppression of the lower orders, or altered by their equally ruthless determination to make themselves the masters of those who have hitherto enslaved them.

The implicit, unconscious and habitual Christianity, which is often so confidently appealed to, may or may not widely exist; it may suffice for the souls of those who possess it in this world, though it may at any moment prove itself insufficient when confronted by militant unbelief or by the onset of temptation; even if they themselves resist they can hardly tell others more hardly pressed why they should even try to resist; and there are grave issues in life which cannot be faced with a merely vague faith. That may even suffice such souls for the life to come; since we shall all be judged by the light we possess and the faithfulness to it we have kept. All that is maintained is that this type of faith is altogether insufficient either to arrest the attacks that are being made on faith, or to rise to the faith that is necessary if mankind is to be extricated from its present personal, social and international difficulties, and if a way of redemption is to be found that will open the

path to true progress and to the realization of the great hopes humanity has cherished and the divine promises have held out to us.

At the present moment there is even a need for the reinforcement of those hopes to which humanity has often given expression and always clung. It is difficult not to feel that everywhere we are suffering from a lack of energy and enthusiasm; people are exhausted, depressed or blasé. We have apparently reached one of those stages in history when life and thought run low. This is a condition almost to be expected as the result of the Great War which, through its awful slaughter, not only deprived us of so much of the energy and enthusiasm we rightly look to youth to contribute, but has seriously depreciated the idealism with which everywhere the War was supported; for it has been found difficult to realize the results the War was supposed to secure: the destruction of militarism, the release of international fears and the creation of a new world made safe for democracy and fit for heroes to live in. If a real recovery is to be made, faith must be recovered; but it must be a faith rationally grounded, confirmed by revelation and powerful enough to remove mountains. The hopes of humanity must be shown to be supported by the purposes of God at work in all our minds, declared by the prophets, and now realizable by the fact and power of Christ, if only men

will be faithful, put the kingdom of God first, and make religion the supreme reality of their lives.

But if the present state of religion is to be lifted to a position where it can be effective for these purposes, it must first be accurately determined what has led to the present depletion of the Church's influence and the diminished power of religion in the life of the world; and to that task we must now give our attention.

II

THE CAUSES OF THE PRESENT CRISIS

IF the state of religion in this country and throughout the world deserves to be considered as critical, and if the nature of the crisis is at all peculiar to the present time, then we ought to be able to discover the exact causes which have operated to produce the decline in the observance, attraction and power of religion, which we have seen reason to regard as indisputable, accelerating and serious. It will be remembered, however, that we have admitted that at many previous stages the condition of the Christian religion has been, as, in some degree, it always must be, critical; but we have tried to show why, nevertheless, this admission does nothing to detract from the application of the term "crisis" to the present condition; and this, because the present state of religion can only be regarded as inadequate to the religious needs of humanity; for while these needs are increasing, religion itself, whether in the extent of its observances, the clearness of its convictions, or its capacity for creative expression, is certainly on the decline.

It is interesting to observe that these assertions can only be evidenced, with any degree of accuracy, for the state of religion in Christendom; and even there such pessimistic assertions take their rise from those who are personally concerned about the state of Christianity; actual statistics can neither overwhelmingly confirm nor contradict such assertions; for the state of religion is something that can only be registered by the anxious and earnest. Similar assertions about other religions can, in the nature of the case, not only produce no statistical evidence, but they are not voiced by those who are themselves directly concerned about the condition of those religions. This is, of course, because those other religions possess no organizations for whose prosperity or progress any individuals are personally responsible. Organization is more than an accidental phenomenon connected with Christianity. Although Christian organizations are sometimes blamed as a mistake and a hindrance, it is obviously of the genius of Christianity to organize itself, and this indicates two things: the great sense of responsibility that is felt for securing its propagation and permanence; and also the conviction that this cannot be accomplished without organization. In this some have seen an indication that Christianity has little faith in its spontaneous attraction and inherent vitality; and Mohammedanism has been contrasted as, on this point, markedly superior; for that

virile faith propagates itself without official evangelists and is maintained with practically no organization. This curious fact and striking contrast only effects, however, to bring out its marked difference from Christianity. Although it has had its saints, mystics and martyrs, Mohammedanism does not demand from its followers anything that involves a supernatural life dependent upon grace, but only a very simple and almost entirely external observance, with a not too high, or, at least, an easily attainable morality. Mohammedanism, in short, sanctions most natural instincts and relies only upon natural impulses; whereas Christianity regards the former as perverted and the latter as insufficient. Hence also the admission, evidenced by the frequent laments and apprehensive fears concerning the state of the Christian religion, that it is essentially precarious in its hold on mankind; for it is confessedly not based upon human nature as such, but is concerned to lift man to a supernatural stage, that is, beyond himself. Therefore Christianity has always to struggle to obtain even recognition both of its truth, and of man's need of salvation; and when a bare recognition has been established, there has to take place in every individual a severe struggle not only to obtain final security, but even to maintain fidelity. Whether these conditions prove Christianity to be essentially unfitted for this world, and unnatural to humanity, is a question for

consideration; but it should not be surprising that what is admitted as inevitable concerning the faith of the individual should be reflected in the condition of the Christian religion as a whole: it is always, in the true sense of the word, precarious;¹ it is frequently critical; there may always be ground for hope, there is none for absolute confidence.

The conditions of individual faith need not, however, be subject to a perpetual state of alarm, and the danger there will never be avoided or helped by a state of panic. Similarly, in considering the world condition of religion and as a general human phenomenon, we should expect to find registered rise and fall, progress and decline; while with Christianity in particular, if it is what it claims to be, religion should exhibit its highest and intensest form, we should expect to find a more sensitive registration of the general movement of religion, sometimes exhibiting critical phases, not necessarily indicating anything so serious as a tendency to final collapse, but indicating that conditions are present which are critical for winning an advance, or for gaining a decisive victory. Although, therefore, we are taking the view that there has been such a serious decline in the popular adherence to Christianity that it calls for serious efforts to be made to stem the receding tide, we equally

¹ That is, dependent upon prayer: from the Latin *precarius*, from *precor*, to pray.

hold that the consideration of the actual conditions might bring about much more than their amelioration: a mighty movement towards a further advance, perhaps even a sweeping conquest of this world for the faith of Christ and the kingdom of God. For it is only in comparison with particularly favourable conditions, and with a recent great movement in Christianity, that we believe we must admit, by contrast, a set-back and a slowing down; and if only the causes of this can be exposed and countered, we may do more than recover ground, we may do something to set in motion

“One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again!”²

or, to use more specifically Christian language, prepare for that revival of religion which has been long desired, and even confidently predicted as imminent, which seems however to have been procrastinated or even inhibited by undermining hindrances and counter forces.

The present crisis in religion, in Protestant countries at any rate, is to be measured by the now apparently spent force of the Evangelical Revival. That revival changed pre-existing conditions which were probably much more deplorable than anything at present discoverable by the most pessimistic observer. The condi-

² Matthew Arnold, “Obermann once more.”

tion of religion in the second quarter of the eighteenth century has been frequently described and analysed.³ We need only recall the lamentable condition both of the Established Church and Nonconformity in this country: services reduced to a terrible dreariness, perfunctorily discharged by those who were responsible for their conduct, and naturally sparsely attended; denial, doubt, sloth and apathy having done their fatal work; heathendom left almost completely unevangelized; the masses at home sunk in darkness and ignorance, sometimes approaching savagery both in their moral and material condition. The Evangelical Revival gave a new impetus to religion which has made itself felt in every branch of the Christian Church and throughout the world: founding the Methodist Societies and their progeny, introducing new life into the Established Church and the older Nonconformist denominations, inaugurating most of the great missionary societies, fostering evangelistic and philanthropic concern for the souls and bodies of men, whosoever and wheresoever they might be. This movement may be conceived as pressing upon the individual soul a sense of the divine love, its responsibility for responding to it, and the consequent opening up of the possibility of a definite religious experience, beginning in con-

³ See Overton's "Evangelical Revival," Chap. I; Baring Gould's "Church Revival," Chaps. I-III; and Wesley's "Journal," *passim*.

scious conversion and ending in entire sanctification.

Even the Roman Catholic Church has not been unmoved by that same influence. The secession of Newman from Anglicanism to Romanism is only a visible indication of an affiliation between Evangelicalism and Catholicism which has never ceased to bear fruit. Newman, as he himself declares,⁴ almost owed his soul to Thomas Scott, who was one of the prominent Evangelical leaders and among the most important of its theologians. The Tractarian Movement in itself has perhaps been only incidentally evangelical, though only then capable of moving the masses, but its insistence upon devotional culture and saintly austerity has naturally fostered an intensely personal religion. There are probably still some members of the Roman Church who doubt or dislike Newman's influence upon their communion, but it is certain that his crossing has not merely increased the alarm that many have always felt about that Church's advance, since there is now no telling when any Englishman may not do the same thing under the stress of need for religious assurance or under the desire for full obedience; it has also certainly created a respect for that authority to which his great mind submitted, where it might otherwise have been dismissed as beneath consideration. It is however a fact

⁴ "Apologia pro Vita Sua," p. 32 (Everyman Edition).

that "The Second Spring" ⁵ which the Roman Church has been conscious of, was due to more than his use of the phrase, and owes something to his own influence. But much more important is the fact that Roman Apologists have seen the wisdom of stressing, namely, that personal religion is as much fostered under the Catholic as under the Evangelical system. For while the place and meaning given to conversion in the Catholic system is very different from the Evangelical interpretation, and much less insistence is placed upon any kind of experience as a ground of religious assurance, the renewed interest in mysticism, and the glorious display of mystical material which the Roman Church is rightly proud to be able to make, is all part of a recognition that the creation of an interior life, conscious of the divine love and the activity of grace, is essential to any religion that is worthy of the name Christian; and this is the peculiar insistence of Evangelicalism. The Evangelical Revival can therefore be claimed as also having helped to deliver Catholicism from too much engagement with the mere mechanism of worship and sacrament, to which the popular interpretation so often reduces it, and to encourage it to exhibit as its heart, to which all must attain if they would learn the secret of its power, that personal union with God which is the

⁵ See Sermon under that title preached in 1852 in "Published Sermons preached on Various Occasions."

aim and consummation of all religion. It may well be that the personal experience which Evangelicalism has so much stressed will be finally found most safely fostered and deeply grounded within the Catholic system of devotion, discipline and sacramental worship; for it is certainly being gravely imperilled and noticeably diminished in modern Evangelicalism, owing to its having so largely abandoned the doctrinal basis of the Gospel and the systematic practice of piety, and is, therefore, now proving itself defenseless against the undermining attacks of modern psychology.

This is however to anticipate somewhat our diagnosis of the decline of religion by mentioning one of the very latest causes for its declension: that which has particularly affected Evangelicalism, already sorely battered by repeated criticism of one kind and another. But this anticipation suffices to indicate the vulnerability of the last revival of religion, and the serious advance that has been registered in our generation by the forces hostile to Christianity. For it is in comparing the present state of religion with the most successful moments of the Evangelical Revival that we can measure the decline that has taken place. The Evangelical Revival is rightly so called, for it has been peculiarly distinguished by an almost continuous succession of revivals. These revivals were mass movements towards definite religion, and they were mostly brought about by forceful evan-

gelists whose preaching was able to influence multitudes to profess conversion and to gather large numbers into the Churches, and these often from the most hopeless and degraded strata of society. Despite the criticism that has been passed upon these revival movements, because of the crudeness of the doctrines preached, the emotional character of the appeal, and the pathological elements that have distinguished this kind of conversion from Wesley's day onwards, it is beyond dispute that the harvest that it has brought to the Christian Church in the last century has been immense and valuable. To take two of its later manifestations: inquiry would demonstrate that the preaching in this country of Mr. D. L. Moody, beside other noticeable effects, raised a large number of recruits for the Christian ministry of most of the Churches, and secured some conspicuous volunteers for the Mission Field; the Welsh Revival had the unusual distinction of being observed by competent theologians, psychologists, and journalists, and its sincere religious character and genuine ethical results have been sufficiently testified. While it is unsafe to predict that nothing like this can happen again in England, or even in Wales, it is difficult for anyone who can sense the present mental and religious condition of the people to imagine that any mass movement could be effected on similar revival lines in the present generation; and that which makes it so difficult to imagine as occurring

again is the change that has come over the religious ideas accepted both by the world outside, and by a considerable number of the people inside the Churches. For the truth is that the constant attacks upon the very foundations of faith, the attempt to reduce Christian doctrine to something easily believed, and the psychological criticism of religious experience have had a marked effect upon the whole populace.

It needs to be remembered that the Evangelical Revival succeeded a period of cold and often cynical rationalistic attack upon the general outline of Christian Theology; nevertheless, this rationalism could hardly make much headway against those who held to the truth and inspiration of the Scriptures. The rationalistic arguments of the eighteenth century had been countered by many doughty defenders of the faith, they had not perhaps penetrated to the largely illiterate masses, and the Wesleys and their followers had only to appeal to the Scriptures for their authority to silence doubt or answer objection.

The nineteenth century has witnessed an attack which has undermined the authority of the Scriptures, not by objections forged outside them, but by what criticism claims to have discovered within them. The attacks upon the historical character of the early chapters of Genesis, with their naïve descriptions of the creation of the world and the making of man, which

offered an inviting field for the coarse rationalism of the eighteenth century, were able to be renewed by the discoveries of geology and the evolutionary theory which marked nineteenth-century science; but after a skirmish on the part of a few not altogether competent theologians, ignorant apparently that a non-literal interpretation of these chapters had been held by some of the Early Fathers, the general acceptance of the indisputable geological and astronomical facts concerning the age and growth of the universe, and the enthusiastic adoption by many theologians of the evolution of man as disclosing a general law of all being, prevented anything like the collapse of faith that might have been expected.

Nevertheless it is to be questioned whether the new scientific view of man and his place in this gigantic machine of a universe have not gravely affected the popular estimate of the general Christian outlook as not only inadequate, but as so far from the facts as to be something more in the nature of a fairy-tale, which may do for children, but must be rejected with contempt by any adult mind; somewhat in the same way that the euphemistic accounts of our own begetting are regarded by youth when the biological facts have been disclosed. The drama of our redemption, beautiful as it can be made to appear, seems to many on a woefully small scale for the mighty stage science has now constructed;

it strikes like an old-fashioned sentimental romance after naked realism has become the fashion. Moreover, the hypothesis of man's slow emergence from an animal ancestry has put upon the story of human rebellion, God's wrath against sin, and the grace of His forgiveness, a very different complexion in many minds.

The more far-reaching hypothesis which professes to be able to account for the emergence of the starry heavens from a diffused and latent energy, which by the same inherent tendency as inevitably produces organic and, finally, mental life, must make the retention of the idea of an omnipotent, pre-existing and providential God, who nevertheless uses the curiously slow and inevitably cruel method of evolution, difficult to all save a very few minds, and those which lean more to philosophical or theosophical notions, than to a God who cares directly for each human soul and is intensely concerned in securing its salvation. It is continually being asserted that the adjustment of the Christian plan of salvation to this immense enlargement of the universe has been carried out without loss, and indeed with gain; but where the imagination has really been impressed by the material measurement of things, it is more than probable that the religion that remains has had to widen its thoughts of God until they have become not only vast, but vague. And not only has assurance concerning a future salvation been, for many, con-

siderably weakened, but doubt must have grown as to wherein present salvation can consist, since individual redemption and interior guidance seem so incompatible with any being who can be the Creator and Ruler of a universe like this. How many must wonder how the once precise and critical plan of salvation can really be true, when it has been made known comparatively so recently, and only to an infinitesimal fraction of the human race!

There are modernist theologians who are continually reminding their more complacent brethren of the necessity for abandoning the doctrine of the Fall and making the many alterations then demanded in the conception of sin and its atonement; but for all their sincere intentions to relieve Christianity from hindrances to its acceptance by the modern mind, they do not recognize that, if adaptations of the faith are to be made, they will have to be of a much more drastic character. There are many minds who, if they are to welcome an atonement, will want one that will atone for a universe whose purposes remain unknown and unintelligible to many, and whose processes involve such suffering to man's senses and such perplexity to his mind; and will demand not simply the Redeemer's suffering for a few hours for the sins of the world, but if reparation can ever be made, suffering for thousands of years for the guilt of having had any part in a world like this.

The hasty suggestion of an eternally suffering God who calls upon us to share His sufferings in order to redeem the world is a heroic and desperate attempt to save the situation. It is not easy to believe that many will find in this idea much help or consolation; it is surely only inviting thought, first, to toy with the idea of a finite God who cannot alter the conditions of existence; then to be driven to accept the conclusion that a blind sensitiveness has somehow become tragically chained to a torturing machine, and in its struggles to get free has called others into existence to help; and so to accept the suggestion of an emergent God, who at present is only the Life Force coming into consciousness which, when gained, will probably make possible a more successful correlation of aim and effect; an idea which is simply nothing more than atheism tempered by the belief, for which there seems little basis in hope, and less in reason, that though there is now no God, one day there may be. Surely these adaptations of the historic Christian faith in a redeeming God must be discerned by anyone but their inventors as nothing more than a skilful veiling of the facts until man can stand the truth. Amongst the last of these optimisms must be placed the idea that man will somehow one day become the God of which he has dreamed, having conquered nature, death and incidentally *himself*, though save for the conquest of his mental stupidity and tendency to worry, this has appar-

ently never been considered among the greater tasks that confront him. Nietzsche, by far the greatest constructor of such ideas, surely voiced them only to reveal the brilliant bravado that is their only justification, and the insanity to which at length they must reduce the mind that holds them.

Pious but not too learned souls might have sheltered themselves against these modern notions, which end in such devastating chaos, if they could have been allowed to remain in possession of their Bibles, whose wonderful literature and comforting promises provide such a different picture of reality and rest upon such different presuppositions of the purpose of life. But from this walled-in garden of the soul many must have been driven out by the labours of the Biblical critics. It has become the fashion to assert that Biblical criticism has only rehabilitated the Scriptures, and made it possible for the modern mind to retain belief in their inspiration. The idea of a developing revelation has certainly rid Christian ethics of some gravely hindering complications, due to the lower stage of morality found in the Old Testament, which has proved a constant source of confusion, especially in time of war. The teaching of the prophets has become a living message to the present age since it was shown to be directed to their own times; instead of consisting only in obscure predictions of future events, whose fulfilment provided ingenious ex-

ercises, not only to readers of the Gospel story, but also to those who desired to read the signs of their own times; for the still unfulfilled predictions might yet be expected to receive literal fulfilment in the movements of international politics, the fortunes of dynastic kingdoms, the destinies of the Jews or of the British Empire. The working out of these comparisons provided an interesting occupation which, like cross-word puzzles, has unexpectedly attracted not wholly uninformed or unintelligent minds; though it must be admitted that it has proved no more successful than the substitution of an Old Moore's Almanack for the chronicle of what actually came to pass. The Higher Criticism is said to have discountenanced this use of the Scriptures. It may have discountenanced, but it has by no means destroyed this absorbing amusement; and if, as it is often claimed, it has drawn the teeth of the atheist lecturer, it has left many scholars now only mumbling the dry bones of Biblical criticism, and the plain man wondering whether he can any longer trust a single statement in the Bible.

So long as the higher critical movement confined itself to the Old Testament, it did not make much difference to the edification to be derived therefrom. It does not diminish the religious value of the latter half of Isaiah to postpone it a hundred years or more later than the great Prophet of that name, nor deprive the Psalter

of its permanent appeal by denying its Davidic authorship. Even the Book of Jonah obviously gained in ethical interest when it ceased to be interpreted as a record of somewhat strange adventures, and was declared to be a parabolical embodiment of an appeal for evangelism in place of the exclusiveness that was becoming the policy of Judaism. But it was when this criticism eventually turned to the New Testament that the effects became more disturbing and distinctive. The criticism that was content to draw attention to the difference between St. Paul's teaching and that of Jesus could be countered so long as the Fourth Gospel was regarded as an authentic record of Christ's teaching written by one of His closest followers. It was still open, when that authority was questioned, to establish the correspondence of Apostolic theology with the Synoptic Gospels, for the picture of Christ there portrayed was not only attractive, but depicted a powerful personality who needed some such explanation, while the Passion was narrated at such length obviously because it was regarded as a religiously important event. The various attempts to solve the Synoptic problem, while they provide a fascinating pursuit for those who have leisure for such things, have however produced so many reconstructions of the historic Jesus that only those who forget their contradictory and exclusive character, and overlook their effect on the ordinary reader, can regard

them as successful or convincing. It is only necessary to notice how even believing critics will airily dismiss not only any story, but any saying, because they suspect it to be late, and, therefore, not to be attributed to Jesus Himself; so that it has come to pass there is hardly anything that Jesus is ever reported to have said, or done, that has not been questioned by some critic or other with a reputation for authority. It has to be admitted that within the present generation there have been swiftly successive reconstructions of the portrait of Christ which, if they are to be taken seriously, leave His personality contradictory or prove the Gospels untrustworthy sources for His biography.

By entirely eliminating the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus, as due to interpolations or misunderstanding on the part of the materialistically minded disciples, who were influenced by the almost demented apocalyptic temper of that generation, Jesus, was presented as a mild teacher of a purely inward religion. This liberal portrait has however been questioned and made almost ridiculous by the Apocalyptic School, to which these elements in the Gospels are the touchstone of reality and provide us with the best means of entering into the mind of Jesus. The orthodox have welcomed this disposal of the previous picture of Jesus, which made Him little more than a teacher of liberal religion, for the new school admits that He regarded Himself as the arbiter

of the future, the holder of a unique place in history, and one who possessed the power of setting the supernatural in motion. But those who have welcomed the havoc which Schweitzer's "Quest of the Historical Jesus"⁶ made of the previous tendencies of German criticism, must have taken less note of what are Schweitzer's own conclusions, however they are concealed by his purple passages and his personal piety: namely, although Jesus believed in the apocalyptic scheme, and expected His death to set it in motion, the crucifixion only proved that it was a false expectation, and the only redemption the cross effected was to release mankind from such apocalyptic expectations. It may be possible for learned theologians to extract from these conclusions the idea that beneath this apocalyptic language there is concealed the truth that "the true divine order is ever ready to break into the world, if men will only suffer it to break into their hearts";⁷ but to less patient and blunter minds it will seem only an admission that the once frequent atheist contention, namely that Jesus was proved wrong in His confident expectation of an immediate return in glory, is the simple truth; and if that is so, not only has the general outlook of Jesus

⁶ English translation of the German "Vom Reimar zu Wrede" (1910).

⁷ "The Church and the Divine Order," Oman, p. 44. See also the general argument of "Christ's Message of the Kingdom," by A. G. Hogg.

been discredited, but His very sanity becomes questionable.

For without further commenting on the various shifts and changing fashions in Gospel criticism, we may content ourselves with considering one other exclusive pair of interpretations. It was the fashion of the liberal critics,⁸ to show that the claims to divinity Jesus was supposed to have made were either later interpolations influenced by the growing devotion of the Church, or could be given an interpretation which claimed no more divinity than could be claimed for man, who, as such, is the child of God. In this process the Fourth Gospel was of course relegated to the level of a purely doctrinal treatise, which took the form of placing Hellenistic ideas, such as we may find in Philo, upon the lips of Jesus, and correcting His portrait accordingly to correspond to that suitable to the Incarnate Word. The Synoptic Gospels were then purged of passages even suspected of similar teaching; particularly the famous passage which lays claim to a mutually unique knowledge existing between the Father and the Son. Although this is recorded by both St. Matthew and St. Luke, and therefore, upon the prevailing critical hypothesis, goes back to what is believed to have been the earliest written

⁸ See such interpretations of Jesus as that of Bousset, Neumann, Wernle and others, and the general standpoint of "The Encyclopædia Biblica" (1903).

form of the Gospel, immense ingenuity has been spent to show that the claim made does not really mean what it appears to involve, namely, a unique relationship of Christ to God.⁹ Similar treatment is meted out to other Synoptic passages, until, with these eliminated, we have a picture of a purely human Jesus, who never claimed to be anything else, His Gospel simply a message of God's Fatherhood and human brotherhood and what can be deduced from that; which is somehow to be trusted, not because Christ had any transcendent knowledge of God, but because it is so beautiful that it must be true, and so confirms a truth known intuitively by our own hearts that it needs no other verification. It hardly needs pointing out, that this estimate gives to the teaching of Jesus concerning God nothing more than the prophets give us, save that it is clearer, simpler and more spontaneous. But it is difficult to see on this interpretation why He should have come to be regarded as the founder of a new religion, why He should have specifically taught that He belonged to another category, and particularly why He should have been put to death for blasphemy.

The irresponsibility of much of this criticism, its objection to passages that present no textual difficulties, and whose authenticity cannot be rejected under any canon of criticism, has at length brought about a reac-

⁹ See Harnack, "The Sayings of Jesus," Eng. trans., pp. 19, 20.

tion, though only to another extreme. This reaction has, so far, been led only by a few, and theirs not names which had previously achieved any considerable fame as critics or historians,¹⁰ and the conclusions they have suggested as the only alternative to the prevailing criticism are not likely to commend themselves to sober-minded people. For this new criticism, basing itself upon the plainly obvious fact that the Gospels tell of a Person who claims a unique relationship to God, and who is depicted as obviously divine, and concluding that no Divine person could exist as a human being, dismisses the Gospel record as a myth. This hypothesis, invented to explain the ascription of divinity to Christ in the Gospels, is not only patently absurd, but it has to account for the compilation of the Gospels by ingeniously impossible ways. The following are the alternatives suggested: (1) the Gospels have been compiled by putting together prophecies from the Old Testament; (2) they are dramatizations of myths of a Saviour God, such as we find in the Greek stories, perhaps aided by elements from the pagan mystery cults or by a passion play performed by the Jews; (3) a personification of the rising social hopes of democracy in revolt against the Imperial régime.¹¹ The absurdity of this myth

¹⁰ W. B. Smith, Drewes, and J. M. Robertson may be mentioned.

¹¹ See Kalthoff's "Rise of Christianity," and Kautsky's "Foundations of Christianity."

hypothesis has, however, only driven those who accept the historicity of the Gospel story, but cannot accept what they, nevertheless, believe Christ claimed for Himself, to invent another theory, namely, that since Christ believed Himself divine He was obviously deluded. The old alternative, if Christ was not God, He was not good, is evaded by the suggestion that He was simply mad. To the support of this conclusion the new psychology is brought in aid: its suspicions, sharpened against all manifestations of genius, find evidence in the Gospels that Christ was a neurotic person, for He was subject to visions and auditions, which show that He was unbalanced, and He could pray and fast for abnormal periods, which are indications that repressions are to be suspected, and this is confirmed by His own practice and commendation of sexual abstinence.

It may be objected that in all this we have been taking notice only of the more radical and irresponsible critics; that no well-known New Testament scholar, who had already established himself as such, has been found to support such fantastic theories; and that excellent work has been done in disproving these theories.¹² But it can be pointed out that the more sober and orthodox critics have made room for these more radical theories by their often groundless suspicions and irresponsible sugges-

¹² See Conybeare's "The Historical Christ" (1914).

tions concerning this or that saying in the Gospels; consequently, the man in the street knows that there is almost nothing in the Gospels that has not been questioned, and when presented with the challenge of Christ's person and teaching, he can fall back upon the excuse that we do not even know for certain that He existed; or, if He did exist, whether He was not mentally unbalanced, or at least an unpractical dreamer.

Is it any wonder, with these ideas disseminated, that so many people should feel that Christianity is not worthy of consideration, or too full of problems and difficulties to be looked to for light on life or guidance in perplexity? For the serious attack of our times comes no longer from rationalism, which the rationalists have themselves discredited, but from those who hold that the vehicle of revelation, the Holy Scriptures, when critically examined, do not yield the revelation they have been supposed to contain; in fact it is doubtful if they yield material for any revelation; for how can doctrines be extracted from texts which are suspected either as interpolations, as influenced by a later doctrinal interest, or as unable to support the doctrine hitherto based upon them? Answers to all these assertions may exist, and may be sufficient, but the man in the street does not know them. For him, at the best, Christianity is clouded in controversy. The doctors disagree, and there

is no court of appeal that he can trust. If the ordinary man reads the Bible for himself he as often only concludes that both the critical and the orthodox interpretations are wrong, and adopts views like those promulgated by the Christadelphians or the Russellites, which only add to the general confusion and uncertainty.

Refuge from the attacks of rationalism and criticism has in our generation been sought in an appeal to religious experience, where it has come to be believed authority is alone to be found. This appeal to experience is oftener made than it is explained wherein it consists; indeed it is often made most of where there is little evidence that experience has been very remarkable. For by religious experience only two things can in the main be meant: the fact of conversion, or the feeling of the Presence of God. The first is predominantly a Protestant, and the second predominantly a Catholic experience. But for conversion to be a sufficient basis for theological assurance, certain elements are necessary. The conversion must have been sufficiently dramatic and decided to impress not only the subject, but the observer who knows him well. It is just such conversions which are rare, especially among those who are capable of arguing about the seat of authority in religion. The nature of the mystical sense of the feeling of God's presence is now being investigated by Catholics them-

selves;¹³ but feeling has never been made use of by the more conscious and intelligent mystics as an evidence of anything. It is either, strictly analysed, not a feeling at all, or if it is, it should be superseded. They too have relied only upon a great change in character as the evidence that such a feeling is divinely produced; but naturally such evidence can only be adduced by others than themselves. Nevertheless, it is upon both these types of experience that modern psychology has now fastened, and with disturbing effect. We have seen how some of the advanced schools of the new psychology have already disposed of the claims that the personality of Jesus constitutes a divine revelation. Some of their exponents have adopted, with apparently little inquiry into the subject, the hypothesis that the character of Jesus is a mythical production, while others have preferred to treat Jesus as a neuropathic subject. The appeal to interior experience, whether of conversion, or of a sense of the reality of God's Presence, presents a target for the suspicions and crude explanations which these schools do not hesitate to put forward. It is pointed out that not only is conversion a phenomenon of all religions, and that there are such things as counter-conversions to unbelief, but that conversion can be simply explained as the breaking out of repressions,

¹³ See Maréchal's "Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics," Section II.

which may be brought about by a variety of causes, some of them nothing more than an inevitable result of repression itself. This takes, of course, a sublimated expression which deceives the subject, and is generally in some disguised form of the sex instinct. If however the experience in question is a more gradually developed conviction of the reality and presence of God, that is explained as a projection of our own ideal personality, or a rationalization of the instinct for self-preservation, which desiring some eternal anchorage for the precarious self, finds this in the idea of God, which is falsely taken to correspond to some external and transcendent reality. This psychological attack, when it is combined with the suggestion that the confirmatory picture of Jesus Christ is also only an outcome of the myth-making, idealizing or personalizing process, by which our instincts and wants are rationalized and justified, naturally aims a very powerful blow at two important elements of religious evidence at once, shows that they both proceed from the same source, and thereby discredits the support they are supposed to give to one another.

Some exponents of the New Psychology have traced a good deal of religion, whether in its ritual expression or in its inner experience, to disguised sexuality, and with the aid of material derived from comparative religion, and from the symbolical language used by some

of the mystics, they can produce a considerable amount of suspicious evidence. The sanction that some of these psychologists have given to the satisfaction of the sexual instinct, even in its hitherto reckoned illegitimate and perverted forms, has given a further impulse to the already over-developed sexuality of our times, which has therefore become increasingly and outspokenly rebellious against the condemnations and restrictions of religion. Every one is aware how religion frowns down upon the use of sex functions outside legitimate marriage, proclaims true marriage to be monogamous and indissoluble as long as life lasts, and counters the fierce temptations and frequent seductions of sexual desire by demanding a complete chastity, which has always been found difficult, but is now frequently declared, on alleged psychological authority, to be undesirable, dangerous or impossible. In modern life much seems to conspire, and is often deliberately employed, to excite this instinct through the constant stimulation of the imagination in suggestive novels and plays. Whatever advantage the more frank and open discussion of sex problems may have, it is to be feared that overstimulation of sex desire is one of its inevitable by-products. This insurgent appetite only needs the final suggestion that the chastity demanded by religion is not only an unnatural repression, but that all the time it is secretly satisfied in a disguised form by religious

worship and devotion, to abandon restraint, overthrow all barriers and either nourish a secret hate or proclaim open hostility against any religion that demands these unnatural repressions, promulgates these irrational taboos, and encourages these hypocritical practices. The demand, therefore, for a free, less trammelled, more adventurous life of sex-expression not only challenges the moral authority of the Christian religion, but suggests that its attraction is due to nothing more than an unhealthy repression, dictated by a gloomy outlook and timid fears, which is moreover only forced to provide for a disguised indulgence of instincts that are natural and irresistible, in the phantasies of religion and the obsession of a love for an imaginary God. More cautious and concealed language than this we have employed may be used, but this is what it means and amounts to.

The combination of intellectual objection and moral revolt would be powerful enough in itself, but its damaging effect might have been lessened if only, during the same period, there had not been going on a change in external life which was helping to undermine religious feeling and conviction by drawing men away from religious observances. Let the psychologists make what they will of the fact that our sense of the supernatural depends very largely upon the stimulus of common worship and the cultivation of private devotion,

but a fact it is, and anything that strikes at these will inevitably diminish the sense of religious reality, so that it will prove more open to the attacks of unbelief and the atmosphere of doubt than if these observances had been maintained. Moreover, despite all that may be said against the inefficiency and remoteness of modern preaching, it is from the pulpit that there may still be heard the best refutations of the attacks made upon religion in books and articles; but the people who most need to know of these refutations are generally not there to hear them.

Ever since the Reformation the custom of public worship has been increasingly subject to disintegrating influences. The outbreak of controversy which that movement produced could not but disturb devotion and destroy the spirit of worship. The disturbing influence of that particular controversy is now more often operative in Catholic than in Protestant places of worship; for while in the latter Catholicism is often regarded as beneath debate, in the former so much time has to be taken up with proving that the Catholic Church is alone true, that Anglicanism is an impudent imitation or that Nonconformity has abandoned the essential elements of Christianity, that the high and demanding worship in which such addresses and sermons are set is thus made difficult to attain; while the actual effect on outsiders is probably not nearly so convincing

as if the address were more in conformity with, or in preparation for that worship. Similar complaints are sometimes heard concerning Protestant places of worship because of the intrusion of disturbing elements, such as the discussion in the pulpit of political, critical or other controversial problems; though the motive for such complaints is often low, selfish and due to partiality. But there seem to be a hundred excuses always available for the abandonment of worship; and there always will be, until worship is recognized to be not only a divine command, but a human necessity. The hiving off of the people into separate conventicles in order to follow peculiar forms of worship is a further influence which tells on the side of abstention, for it simply destroys at a blow one of the greatest reasons for worship, namely, that we should worship *together*; while it diminishes the great confirmation of faith which comes from people of all sorts and conditions joining together in a common act of worship. Half the reason for worship has gone once it ceases to be common. The sense of separation and the consciousness of division becomes intense, painful and distracting through the very attempt to unite in that worship which in its highest and more conscious forms must emphasize the unity of God, the unity of man, and the unity of God and man; while the loss to a wider feeling of humanity and to the sense of brotherhood which are fostered by all worshipping

the same God in the same way is considerable, whether we are conscious of it or not. The compulsions, of whatever kind, to which resort has been made in order to create or maintain the habit of common worship may be as mistaken as they are ineffective, but they nevertheless witness to the sense of what will be lost if people in any numbers absent themselves from worship; for it is something in the nature of a crime against humanity. This accounts quite easily for the bitterness with which separatists have been denounced and the fear which is felt when masses of people begin to absent themselves from worship altogether; alongside all the financial loss, the challenge to authority, and the danger to prestige, which may be feared, there is a deeper consciousness that something is being done that aims at human solidarity both with one another and with God.

The Protestant Reformation has further helped towards destroying the incentive to worship by the place that it has given to preaching; not that preaching can ever be too good or too great, but it should be devoted to the end of teaching people how to worship. In Protestantism worship has been neglected by being made subsidiary; and to make churchgoing depend upon forceful and attractive preaching means that it depends upon something at all times comparatively rare, and in certain circumstances, like those now pre-

vailing, not only almost non-existent, but unable to be cultivated; for the preoccupation of the pulpit with criticism and problems, which the very desire for efficiency and helpfulness demands, destroys very largely the power of preaching. In the more Catholic type of worship less value is placed upon preaching, but so much so, that it generally descends to a most futile and childish interlude, whose only recommendation is that it will soon be over. There is therefore nothing to attract to worship save either the sense of obligation, or actual hunger for worship. Among the Roman Catholics obligation has been stressed so far that it is taught that Mass must be attended if peril of falling into mortal sin is to be avoided;¹⁴ but actual attendance at Mass does not necessarily entail that real worship is being rendered, and the obligation to attend Mass seems to be often insisted upon, without equal care being given to explain what worship is, and why it is necessary; for while, of course, worship is to be offered to God because He is worthy, He demands this not for His sake, but for ours, since to worship Him truly brings us joy and strength, and is the supreme satisfaction of the soul.

The fact is, of course, that true worship is an exceed-

¹⁴ By adding together different parts of the Catholic Catechism, a quite intelligent American Protestant concluded that to miss Mass was to incur damnation.

ingly difficult mental exercise. In its primitive expression it is apparently not very clear either about its object or its purpose; there is a strong unconscious instinct at work which does not ask for rational explanations of what is being done; it is enough that it is the custom; and when in answer to inquiry explanations of its necessity are given, they vary in course of time and often fall short of the real reason. In between this unconscious instinct and an intelligent worship, lies a transition period which is hard to bridge over and is open to every kind of seduction. It is such a period which all civilization is now passing through; people do not see "what is the good" of going to Church, and there are increasing temptations to do something else far more exciting and attractive.

The coming of the War with its break-up of the accustomed routine of life, and the reaction that has since been set up, either towards apathy among the old, or in forgetting everything in excitement among the young, has given almost the final blow to a previously declining custom. The provision of excursions and entertainments, and now the advent of the motor-car, have multiplied alternatives to what at one time was almost the only diversion possible on Sunday. As any spectator can easily observe, the churches have emptied themselves on to the roads; and more people of every class now look forward to Sunday as the national

weekly holiday, to be spent either in sheer lazing away of the day, or else in the feverish pursuit of some excursion, amusement or game. If there was anything in worship that corresponded to any real need of man, it ought to be expected, that even if, for a time, the general custom was surrendered, there would soon be a reaction; exciting rushing about would pall, most of the available sights would have been seen, the quiet and change sought from crowds and towns would have been destroyed by the very fact that every one else was seeking them at the same time and place, and churchgoing would once more assert its ancient hold, and by its very promises of peace and inspiration win back the masses. This reaction may yet come, but it takes some time to discover the loss that has been sustained by this change of habit; and meantime the ranks of those who fall out of this rush after recreative interest, disappointed by its deceptive results, are continually being recruited by the younger generation, which is determined to give the new experiment an exhaustive trial. Whereas once the Sunday Schools were the best recruiting agency of the Church, it is they which are now showing the most serious decline.

The fact is that the operation of the human need for worship, if only to correct the balance of ordinary life, with its engagements with the immediate, the material

and the secular, is buried beyond feeling under the enormous multiplication of modern interests. There is scarcely a moment left between feverish work and as feverish recreation to give time to ask the question even whether one is enjoying oneself, leave alone what existence means, and what life is for; so much energy and attention is taken up with the means of living that the end of life is forgotten and is never even inquired after. Breakdowns, depressions, discontentment may at length visit a good number, but, like death, these only affect those who are passing through these experiences. Others, perhaps believing that reflection will only bring depression, and inquiry will only raise insoluble problems, simply repress all serious thought and try to ward off as long as possible any disturbing considerations. Even if something more worthy of attention than a round of hectic pleasures is sought, there has been lately a vast multiplication in devices for interesting the mind, in the provision for listening to music or reading stories, all specially designed not to arouse questioning thoughts or disturbing reflections. If still higher pursuits are demanded there is endless diversion to be found in acquainting oneself with the fascinating discoveries of modern science, or taking some part in the all-engaging task of political reform; so that the modern man's whole energy and attention is taken

up with the visible world, which presses upon him with an insistency magnified beyond all comparison.¹⁵

When contrasted with the visible world, the invisible has always had a struggle to secure the attention of man; but in our generation the extent, the interest, the insistence of the visible has been artificially increased a thousandfold; while it can hardly be maintained that our sense of the invisible has proportionately increased, if indeed it has not actually decreased. For it is no longer even visible nature that holds man's mind, but manufactured sensation, and nature as scientifically desiccated and magnified. Certain it is that never has the material world loomed so large, not only in the assault upon, and the attraction that it has for the senses, but even in the interest that it has for the mind. The history of the material universe is now being slowly unfolded, and reveals a story not only of a process immeasurably vast and unimaginably mighty, but it is invested with a fascinating and almost romantic interest. Reading backwards, by means of geology, the story

¹⁵ If Wordsworth could write over a hundred years ago:

“The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!”

it is hardly within the power of any modern poet to describe how much the world is with us now.

of our planet, and then by astronomy, picturing the evolution of the stars, we are confronted with an object which not only can engage a lifetime of study, but exhausts the mind with awe and admiration. The atomic elements which form the fabric of this titanic machine have now been analysed, and we find a further story of worlds within worlds, the movement back from the infinite to the infinitesimal unfolding further material interest and astonishment; the mystery as well as the magnificence of nature almost sufficing to deify matter, or, at least, the energy of which it is compact, as not wholly unphilosophic minds have already done; for the universe as pictured by science has outstripped the Deity as described by theology. Contrasted with this the evolution of the organic world is a shorter story, and because of the greater difficulty of explaining it, not perhaps of so great an attraction for the mind; the advent of life making for the materialist problems which his mechanistic explanations cannot solve, and introducing into a world as simple as it is vast, elements not only of unpredictability, but of passion and pain, strife and cruelty, death and decay, from which many minds are glad to turn away. The new interest in the creatures which natural studies have fostered, and especially the life and ways of birds, are providing absorbing and delightful studies; the enthusiasm that some people display over the ingenuity, beauty and compara-

tive refinement of bird life is obviously exerting the same fascination which angels had for the mediæval mind. In this materialistic outlook upon the universe, first the creatures other than man, and then the material framework of things exercise a vastly predominant place, in which human history and conscious mind get overlooked and almost forgotten; indeed it is a relief to turn from the hectic tangle of human affairs and the endless friction of personalities to these more orderly, sober and understandable concerns. Modern man, even so far as he is intellectual, has therefore very little time or inclination to ask ultimate questions about the significance of personality, or the meaning of mind; for the new psychology, morbidly fascinating as it can be, is more concerned with that part of our mental life which is unconscious and follows mechanical laws, and in the main it studiously avoids the ultimate issues of morality and philosophy. Indeed, in so far as philosophy, touched by the same influences, interests itself in such an idea as that of God, it is to bring that august conception under the dominion of a mathematical calculation and a mechanical development; it is only the totality of nature considered under the disguise of a theological term. Thus, again, no personal religious interests are introduced, or are apparently ever thought of even by the mind of the philosopher, who is quite content with the idea of a God yet to emerge, with

whom, of course, man can have no present personal or religious relations.

From the whole tendency of modern life and thought it will be seen that religion is crowded out or carefully evaded. In addition to this, and ever more fiercely in civilized life, economic interests and pressure operate to engage the whole mind of man. In the one direction the enormous prizes held out to avarice, and in the other the pressure of fear lest he should fall into poverty, both effectually absorb man in material concerns. In the present economic system, if system it can be called, for it has grown up without plan or thought, it is no longer possible for the majority of people living in civilization to grow their own food, or even with any certainty to engage in labour by which to earn the money to buy it. To fall out of the line of reasonable security into that of complete insecurity, with anxiety, degradation, and starvation becoming imminent, is an all too possible contingency. And if anyone would completely insure against such a fate, it is not sufficient to have a will to work, or even trained capacity; it is necessary to have a reserve of capital which will yield interest sufficient to live on. This is the one trustworthy bulwark against destitution; and even that must be sufficiently large and carefully distributed so as to be proof against the erratic movements of fashion and the manipulations of financiers, which may suddenly cause large accumula-

tions of capital mysteriously to disappear. For avarice, which according to mediæval morality, was a deadly sin, and is presumably latent in most of us, needs to be stimulated as if it were a virtue, in order to make the necessities of existence secure. Before civilization invaded them, in some tropical countries and under savage conditions, it was merely necessary for a man to stretch out his hand and eat what nature put in his way to find almost all he needed; in other climates and more advanced communities it was only necessary to work in order to eat; in still more advanced conditions work had to be done that was not directly concerned with eating, so that if a man could work and was willing to do so, there was no fear that food and shelter could not be obtained by every one; but in modern civilization one must learn first of all how to make money, and "work" must be directed not only ultimately, but immediately to that end. Hence the feverish struggle of those whose avarice can be excused on the plea of a necessary provision against possible contingencies, as well as of the constant fear lest at any moment one might fall back into the condition of those who have only their labour to sell, only too frequently, in the present system, a position of the utmost precariousness.

It would not be surprising if these various converging conditions combined to destroy religion altogether; the

influence of the sceptical attacks on the foundations of religion, the absorbing interest in material things, and the pressure of earthly cares tend to make religion appear doubtful, remote or irrelevant. It is therefore as hopeful as it is remarkable that nevertheless religion continues at all. Despite the failure to register itself in common worship or private devotion, and with the modern aversion from expressing itself in a dogmatic creed, there is no doubt that religion continues in many minds as a generally accepted background of vague belief in a Supreme Being, a divine attribute, or a worthy purpose, remote enough from prevailing interests or pressing concern, but there if it should ever be wanted. A vague remnant of Christian sentiment doubtless remains with others, which assures them that there is enough reality in religion to secure for them forgiveness, comfort or power, if ever these should be badly needed. The attacks made upon religion from one quarter and another in this generation, would, if given serious weight, of course, entirely remove even that final refuge and dissipate that remote background; they may have had an effect sufficient to excuse the profession or the practice of definite religion; they may make the whole question too doubtful to demand serious investigation; but they have not created dogmatic unbelief, not always even when that is airily or boastfully expressed. But these attacks, if they continue, must tell

in the end; though it is quite possible that the wide acceptance of the hypothesis that after all atheism is the simple truth would bring about precisely that serious reconsideration which would establish the fact of God and the need of religion. Meantime this vague and remote religion exists, for some religion men must have; but such religion is not enough for the developing human needs of the present age. The critical nature of the situation therefore consists in this, that the time is drawing near when men must exchange this indeterminate position for either a convinced unbelief or a more assured and effective belief. It is the pressure in the former direction that makes the hour critical; it is swinging in the balance which way things shall develop for humanity generally. And it is to the direction of that critical hour, not merely to avert disaster, but to gain victory that every consideration should be given and every effort made.

III

THE ISSUES CRITICAL FOR HUMANITY

THE decline in religious observance which we have been investigating can, we believe, only be traceable to a decline in the demand for a clear and confident faith. It may well be that a kind of obscure and residual faith remains, in a more or less hazy or solvent condition, among the general populace of this and other Western lands. In times of domestic distress it may prove itself still sufficient to support hope, or move to prayer, and in times of national peril it may seek the comfort of corporate expression in public worship; but such a faith produces no urgency to continuous communion, and provides no basis for intellectual conviction; but rather only rises as high as a wistful hope or a questioning doubt concerning most of the things once assuredly believed. Apart from some profound personal disturbance which must drive the individual to seek greater certainty, or some widespread revival which will awaken masses of the people to the consciousness of spiritual realities, such faith as may now be found among the general non-churchgoing public, and, it is

to be feared, among many who still attend divine service, or are even members of the various Churches, must be in process of vanishing away. If the trend of the disintegrating process continues unchecked, another generation or two will see the whole population unaware even of the problems of faith, so far from the horizon of immediate and pressing concerns will religion have become. Although this consummation is dismissed as impossible by those of complacent religious opinions, and even evidence of any movement in such a direction is denied, yet there are those who believe not only that such a complete disappearance of religion, save among a few eccentric and superstitious people, is inevitable, but that it is to be welcomed and should be worked for. There are perhaps not yet many who go so far as publicly to declare that they would welcome the entire disappearance of religion; probably most of those who neither make profession of religion nor practise its observances would like to feel that it was there to be turned to if it were needed; and for this reason, no doubt, they are willing to allow others to keep up religious observances, and may even take care to see that their children receive some religious instruction. Such persons often display a curious attitude; for, while professing to honour women and love children, they regard religion as something only fit for women and children; which shows not only that they despise religion, but

that they despise women and children. But there is a small number of more articulate and logical minds which openly professes satisfaction over the decline of religion, and predicts its disappearance as among the positive gains which the future may bring to humanity.¹

The reasons for welcoming this practically complete disappearance of religion are, of course, different with different people. There are those who obviously cherish a bitter hatred for the idea and all that supports it. We need not give much consideration to such persons; they are represented by the small groups who must find such expression for their relentless opposition to religion as is to be heard, though now less frequently, in the popular rostrums of our public parks, or may be read in such perhaps not widely read organs as "*The Freethinker*," or even less known journals of a similar type. Here the expression of anti-religious feeling is so bitter, and the arguments employed so unfair, that it is evident that some merely personal question, a mental complex, or moral rebellion is involved. In even more philosophically disposed minds, some such prejudice of a non-intellectual character must be suspected, so impatient and peevish are their constant references to everything religious. There is a group, however, worthy of more consideration, which regards the disappearance of reli-

¹ Mr. Bertrand Russell is among the most intellectual of those who take this position: see his "*Sceptical Essays*."

gion to be welcomed simply in the interest of what is believed to be the truth. These regard the great religious institutions of the past with interest and even with reverence, though they believe that the time has now come when man must abandon what has now been discovered to be an amalgam of illusion, myth and imagination. There may be even an expression of regret that the once firmly believed doctrines of religion can no longer be accepted,² but the truth must be accepted and faced, whatever the consequences. Some even deep thinkers seem to have been willing to face these consequences for humanity with that fortitude which they feel is the only attitude left to take towards a universe that contains no answer to man's questions or satisfaction for his desires.³ This habit of mind is one that was more common to Victorian unbelief, though it perhaps still finds some expression in the more reverent type of unbeliever attracted to the Rationalist Press Association.

Recruits to the small but forceful army of definite unbelief have recently been gathered, or given new grounds for their attitude through some of the teach-

² A curious expression of this attitude may be found in Clifford's famous words "The Great Companion is dead"; for they seem to imply that he was once alive: as fantastic a notion as that of a God who is not yet, but some day will be. See his "Lectures and Essays," ii, 250.

³ This seems to be the meaning of the only prayer Meredith could commend: "Give us fortitude to bear the truth."

ings of the New Psychology. With this group the idea of God may be treated with seeming reverence as one of the most important complexes of the human mind, not to be disturbed without due caution, since for some individuals the consequences may be serious; but it is tacitly assumed that the idea does not correspond to any reality external to the individual. With some exponents of the New Psychology, however, it is openly professed to be one of the aims of psycho-analysis to break up the complex that gathers round the idea of God, since it is believed that, not until man has got rid of the idea of a divine descent and the dream of immortality, will he be entirely free from the phantasies and fears manufactured by religion, and so be able with calm mind and penetrating analysis to adjust himself to reality.⁴ A tone of personal hostility to religion, with the attitude of mind that it dictates, is discernible with some of the exponents of the New Psychology, but those whose attitude towards religion is less openly opposed may be all the more dangerous, if, whatever they say, they actually accept the notion that the idea of God is nothing but the centre of a manufactured phantasy, an egoistic complex, or a mistaken objectification of one's personal ideals. It is to be noted, however, that some of the New Psychologists are alive to the danger of too ruth-

⁴ These two attitudes seem to be taken respectively by two of our greatest psychological analysts, Jung and Freud.

lessly or prematurely getting rid of the God-idea, and predict that man may not be able to dispense with the idea for many years to come.⁵ Although this attitude involves, however concealed, the conviction that the idea of God is untrue, it also reveals some recognition of the fact that the idea of God has an importance for the mental make-up even of modern man, and that the effect might be disastrous if it were too hastily driven out. This admission serves to emphasize the point with which we are immediately concerned, namely, the great issues for humanity which are raised by the decline in religious conviction and observance.

There are no doubt some also who are sincerely convinced that religion has had a baneful effect upon humanity, and that its complete disappearance will only release the movement towards progress that has hitherto been impeded by its superstitions and fears, its inhibitions and prejudices. It may be admitted that ideas which gather round religion have sometimes been inimical to human emancipation from cruel customs; but there exists no court of appeal from those disputants who, on the one side, hold that religion is essential to human happiness, and those who hold that it has been the main cause of human misery. To settle this dispute

⁵ Cf. Tansley, "The New Psychology," p. 138. "It cannot be doubted that God has been a necessity to the human race, that He is still a necessity, and *will long continue to be.*" (Italics ours.)

it would first be necessary to define religion, and to find an accepted standard of progress; and these are tasks which, if not impossible, are not likely to secure agreement among the parties to the dispute. It would also be necessary to get agreement as to which was the highest religion, and what was essential to it; so that we could separate out the perversions, misunderstandings and alien accretions with which the human mind is so liable to adulterate even the noblest things. In these circumstances we shall have to be content to conjecture what would be the inevitable result of a complete disappearance of religion from the mind of man, even if that is the only way of insuring also the disappearance of those concomitants of religion which its most enthusiastic defenders would have to admit have been all too often found connected even with Christianity, but which they themselves would as completely disown as not belonging to its essence, but only due to its corruption.

Let it then be supposed that with the disappearance of religion there at the same time were removed from the history of the future, personal cruelty, social injustice and international war, and that the mind of man became perfectly reconciled to the idea that his origin was due to no creative act or purposeful mind, but was evolved either from inorganic material, or from some psychic energy equally deficient in conscious purpose

or in power to produce any other development; it must still be obvious that religion has played such a part in the development of mankind that without it man may become a very different kind of creature. That man needs to be different, and can be, at least one religion has consistently taught; but what will that difference be if man becomes irreligious?

It can hardly be widely realized by the average modern what a place religion once held in the mind and life of man. From the Old Testament, if he is any longer acquainted with its literature, he might gather that religion was the predominant interest and concern of the community; but even if he noted this, he might imagine that this was due simply to the religious convictions of those who wrote the Hebrew Scriptures, or was to be reckoned among the peculiarities of the Hebrew race. But we have now complete evidence before us that not only every form of ancient civilization, but the lowest culture of savage tribes was saturated with religion; so that the heathen were not distinguished from the Chosen Race by having no religion, for they had just as many, or even more, religious observances, only they were devoted to the worship of other gods; and though with a different meaning, they practised much the same rites. By means of archæological remains we can penetrate far back into human history; we have now come into intimate contact with all exist-

ing savage tribes; but in both cases we find ample evidence that, however low in culture or mentality man may be, he is intensely concerned about religion. Indeed, prehistoric man seems to have been much more concerned about his relationship to unseen beings superior to himself, and much more certain of a life beyond the grave, than the average educated person of our Western civilization. But whereas, once upon a time, it was made a count against religion that it was not natural to man or found among primitive peoples, but was due to sophisticated argument or invented by priestly impostors, the argument has now to be reversed; for religion is now objected to as a superstition which belongs essentially to primitive man and is only possible to the uneducated mind; so that it must naturally disappear with the exercise of the questioning faculties and the spread of scientific ideas. Many of those who possess some second-hand anthropological knowledge regard religion as akin to magic, myth or folk-lore, and where it reappears in time of mental distress, or in time of panic can be revived even among the masses, as only a resuscitation of racial memory. With the progress of education the disappearance of religion is therefore as inevitable as the disappearance of astrology or alchemy, and the influence of the preacher or the priest will be undermined just as the power of the medicine man or the fortune-teller has diminished.

This disappearance of religion is to be welcomed, because with it will depart the last remnant of obscene rites, bloody sacrifice, and sexual taboos, as well as those cruel persecutions and holy wars which derived their sanction wholly from religious fears and fanaticism. Then the pathway to progress will be permanently open, unhindered by those prohibitions or apprehensions with which religion has always sought to check free inquiry, scientific conclusions, social emancipation, and personal independence; and we can look forward to a period of rapid advance towards widespread knowledge and the free development of happy personality, the attainment of international peace and the establishment of social justice.

Leaving aside for the time the necessity for analysing this optimistic expectation of the results that will follow the abandonment of religion, since that must involve us in considerable controversy with many types of mind and groups of opinion, and accepting for the moment the ascription of so many evil hindrances to religion, we must meanwhile call attention to one fact that is fairly generally admitted, namely, that religion has been responsible for the invention and inspiration of all the arts. There is not one of the seven great arts, namely, dancing, drama, music, poetry, architecture, sculpture, painting, which was not originally, not merely associated or connected with religion, but actually brought

into existence to express religious feeling, and embody religious ideas. The dance was an effort to imitate, or perhaps to initiate the movements of nature; drama, as in the pagan mysteries, represented the processes of nature, conveying to the observers a revelation of its inner meaning, and solemnly inaugurating them into fellowship with the underlying and undying forces of life. Music arose to give time to the dance, and then poetry added to its rhythmic movements that which provided a more articulate utterance of religious feeling, or made clearer the instruction to be conveyed. The more concrete representational arts of architecture, sculpture and painting followed from the desire to provide a place of worship, sheltered from the vagaries and inconveniences of the weather, and to surround the worshippers with reminders of the unseen world. It must be admitted by all who have studied the subject that it was under the inspiration of religion and the necessities of worship that the higher arts especially reached their supreme expression. If religion is to disappear it may therefore be found that the arts will vanish with it. In the judgment of many there is not wanting evidence that since the arts have been divorced from religion they have become confused, corrupt, and afflicted with what seem to be symptoms of sheer insanity; in turn seeking in the merely pretty and the conventional, or in hideousness and rebellion an inspiration which has obviously

been lost. In the endeavour to create something new, dancing, sculpture, painting and music can now only return to types which, throwing over all that the discipline of the ages has taught, are all too reminiscent of the most primitive efforts of the savage or the child, while architecture reverts to types which inevitably recall the heavy tyrannies of Assyria or the weary pride of Babylon.

It may be that the desolation which has overtaken so much art, threatening its very existence, may seem to many a matter not worthy of consideration. After all, man can dispense with art; it is not a necessity; and there are not wanting suggestions from some anthropologists that supreme artistic expression is generally to be found alongside a low mental life, while the New Psychologists bring confirming suspicions that the artistic impulse, like religion, is to be traceable to the sublimation of sexual desires. To the more heavy-minded of our psychologists the tendency of art to imaginative creation is dangerous to rational sincerity, since it only offers an escape from that realism which the mind must be compelled to face if it would be brave and free. Fairy-tales for children are therefore to be discouraged, and, as belonging to the same order, religion for the adult. But while it is to be feared that, for many, the disappearance of art would not bring inconsolable grief or much immediate sense of loss, it needs to be

noted that art, even when reckoned of so low a utility as mere play, is at least for man a creation and an expression of delight. Is there not then some danger that with the disappearance of religion there may be a considerable disappearance of delight? Just at present, owing to the suggestion of the New Psychology, there is considerable suspicion that the very joy, comfort and refuge that religion brings to a few constitutes its sufficient condemnation. It may be admitted that religion has, in its perverted or its undeveloped forms, given rise to gloomy and baseless fears, or has been sought because it seemed to promise relief from conscience, and a refuge from the facts of life. But is there to be a prohibition of all relief, rest or refuge for mankind? Take the question of holidays, which have now become such a necessity in our drab surroundings, over-crowded houses, and over-driven lives: are they also to be forbidden as a wasteful stoppage of productive energy or a departure from psychological realism? There will be an outcry from all mankind if it is proposed to curtail or prohibit holidays. Then perhaps it might make a point for our argument the toiling masses would appreciate, to remind them that holidays are a religious invention. No doubt the burden of a gloomy Sabbath, into which the Christian Sunday has been too often perverted, gave to the rebellious of the last generation a poor conception of what a religious holiday involved. But even then it must be

remembered that the restrictions of the Jewish Sabbath, which had been quite wrongly transferred to the Christian Sunday, contained at least the proscription of work on that day; thus giving a weekly charter of rest to the toiler and the slave. When in these days it is sometimes indignantly inquired what the Church has done for the working man, it can be replied with sufficient truth for the occasion that it has given him all the holidays he possesses. Moreover, it was a complaint at the Reformation that the observance of holy days involved too much leisure and feasting, and their number was seriously curtailed, while the remainder became merely quarter-days for the payment of rent. In countries like China a weekly rest day was unknown until contact with Christianity introduced the custom. Perhaps therefore the emancipated modern who takes to the golf course, or motors out to the country on Sunday, glad to be free of the churchgoing habit, might remember that but for the Jewish and the Christian religion he would not be enjoying even the opportunity to spend Sunday as he does.

Of course it has now become a matter of rational recognition and national provision that man has a right to some freedom from work and opportunity for recreation; but it should not be forgotten that this was first secured for men by religious sanctions, and there is no certainty that secular sanctions or mere recreational em-

ployment of such opportunities will persist if their sacred origin and religious obligations are entirely forgotten.

But this brings us to those larger issues that have been opened up by the recognition that artistic aspiration and delightful leisure owe much to religion. For it is maintained that not only must these be surrendered, however delightful they may be, but everything of comfort, refuge or joy that religion may be credited with having brought to the simple, and this at the bidding of rationalism and the demand of truth. Beyond the rationalistic objection to the dogmas of religion, supposed to be unanswerable; beneath the psychological objection to imaginative personification and phantasy compensations, which religion is supposed chiefly to consist in; and involved in the call to a rationalistic realism purged of all these things, there can be discerned emerging one of the most fundamental issues that can be raised by and for humanity.

If the idea of a Mind behind the universe, prior to and superior to the mind of man, in short, the idea of God, is to be explained away as a false analogy, a mistaken transprojection of the egoistic impulse, or an invention of emotional desire, then sooner or later it must dawn upon even the moderately thoughtful or the most muddled thinker that the rationality of the human mind has been seriously undermined. It has become the

fashion among the New Psychologists to attribute a great deal of our mental activity to what is called rationalization; that is, an endeavour to give a reason for our impulses and instincts, which is, however, in reality nothing more than an invented excuse. It is certainly true that the human mind is apt at the invention of excuses, and is often ingenious enough to discover a respectable reason for motives and actions which will not bear inspection. But there is a tendency on the part of modern psychology to employ this well-known and generally recognized subterfuge to explain the whole of our mental activity. It has already been employed to explain away the rational system that man has constructed to account for his religious yearnings. The externalization and objectification of the idea of God is traced to man's efforts to satisfy his ego instinct: desiring to find a companion, which is a kind of sublimated sex instinct; one who is supremely concerned in him, when it is an endeavour to satisfy his self-importance; or an anchorage for his own frail personality in some eternal power, which is only an effort to assuage his fundamental fears. If all this is to be discredited as mere rationalization, it seems open to question whether the psychological analysis that thus reduces some of man's most serious and deeply rooted ideas to mere mistakes and subterfuges, governed by ulterior, unworthy or false motives, thus tracing almost everything to some

form of sex gratification, may not with still greater legitimacy be placed in the same category. At any rate the tracing of everything to the sex instinct can also be used to explain the character of much of the new psychological material, and the interest displayed in the subject can sometimes be suspected as being more sexual than scientific; nor can this suspicion be resented by those who have themselves declared that sexuality is omnipresent in us all. But to take higher ground: it does not seem to be recognized by these psychologists that they are practically denying to the human mind any real rational powers, and that in so doing they are condemning the psychological mechanism, which they put forward as the real explanation of the working of the mind, as alike void of any rational value.

This line of thought raises a deeper question for those who concede any rational powers to the mind of man; as all must, if they desire their opinions to have any weight given them. If it is denied that the idea of God has any objective reality corresponding to it, then it becomes questionable whether the mind of man is capable of arriving at truth on any subject whatsoever. For let us suppose, as the only alternative to the creation of man's mind by God, that the mind of man has evolved solely from non-mental origins, and has emerged in a universe which itself possesses no mind. It is obvious that the evolution of the mind of man is

due to no guiding mind, and is not itself a rational process: then, indeed, all the thoughts of man are but vain; for they have simply been educed by the play upon the sensitive organism of his brain of a non-sensitive environment. Quite apart from being unable to account for the evolution of the sensitive and conscious from the unsensitive and the unconscious, (in itself a quite unscientific notion of the possibilities of evolution) the emergence of such a conscious mind must be entirely determined by its unconscious origins and its unconscious environment, and therefore must be entirely incapable of expressing a verdict upon itself, its origins, its environment or their associations. Unless we can posit a preceding and infallible Mind which has bestowed upon the human mind at least the capacity for attaining truth, there is no assurance whatever that the human mind has any capacity for attaining truth, and indeed the word truth has lost its meaning. No wonder therefore that, in our generation, philosophy has come to abandon the older conception of truth, as the correspondence of mind with reality, and has proposed as a definition of truth "that which works." But in doing so it has surrendered the very basis of philosophy, and has abandoned the very meaning of truth; so that this philosophy is discredited from the beginning, and what it puts forward as truth it cannot then claim to be really true. A mind which has accidentally or necessarily

evolved (it does not matter which) from mindless matter, is in no position to discriminate between mind or matter, or declare that the one has evolved from the other. If then the denial of God is openly proposed, or is more surreptitiously suggested by implying that God is nothing more than an idea in the mind of man, it ought to be recognized that the mind of man is not only being thereby deprived of all rational basis whatever, but, seeing how it has been obsessed with this delusion, it must be pronounced constitutionally imbecile. The emancipation from assuming the existence of God and our dependence upon Him, which some modern thinkers profess to have attained, if they will only think a little further, will prove to be a somewhat too complete emancipation from the necessity or even the capacity for thinking at all. Just as the old-fashioned form of free-thought came at length to the conclusion that thought was not free, so the rationalism that refuses to recognize that it is bound to assume God as the only basis for rationality, must at length come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as rationality.

This devastating conclusion, as destructive to the human mind as this type of thought intended it to be only to the soul, is not to be evaded by the plea that reality, not reason, is the search and test of modern thought. It may be suggested by the insufficiently thoughtful that modern research does not concern itself with the ab-

struse question of vindicating the validity of human thought; it simply confines itself to indisputable facts, traces how one fact succeeds another, and on that alone bases its conclusions. But this attempted evasion of the problem of human mentality will not do. The observance of facts is itself dependent upon what capacity for accurate observation the human mind possesses; the conclusions to be drawn from facts are still more dependent upon the accurate working of the human mind. The mere succession of one set of facts after another is itself no proof that these are due to effect and cause; particularly when in the effect something turns up that has no thinkable connection with the cause. If the mental is posited as a result of the non-mental, miracle has been brought back, and on an entirely non-rational basis; we are in a world where anything may come from anything; the basis of religion has been destroyed, but so has the basis of philosophy, science and psychology.

It is to be hoped that sooner or later the irresponsible sceptics of this generation, who are prescribing the thought of so many, will give some time to considering the impossible position in which they are entangled. Meantime, there are many who have neither inclination nor mentality to follow out even so simple and irrefutable an argument; they are content to leave religion out of account; they know that it is disputed, and they are

not capable of settling the dispute themselves; and anyhow they believe religion is quite useless for helping them to what they want. Among these have to be counted many who are concerned with the bettering of this present life, the improvement of the conditions of the people, the reformation of the injustices of society and the emancipation of those who are enslaved to degrading toil, painful disease or unhappy disposition. Here are tasks, they say, which call for practical effort, and promise glorious results; why waste time in discussing questions that have not only proved themselves incapable of solution, but have diverted man's attention from the things that could be put right, if only he would make the attempt? The debates of philosophy and the disputes of religion can at least wait until more immediate concerns are rectified; then, if we have the inclination, we can give ourselves to these academic discussions and the luxuries of religion.

It will be advisable, therefore, to look a little more closely at these well-worth-while and practicable tasks, to which our attention is called and our devotion demanded. The conceivably remediable ills of humanity which cry out for redress and reform can be classified as briefly four: physical pain, international warfare, social injustice, and mental unhappiness. It may appear novel to some to bracket the fourth as on an equality with the first three; but it is now necessary, and the necessity is

symptomatic; though the inclusion of purely personal psychic discomfort among the pressing evils of mankind must await its justification until we come to consider it separately. Meantime about the first three there is growing agreement; though it must be noted that even here the agreement is in a descending scale. We all know enough about pain in ourselves to agree that it should be relieved in others; the fact that war causes such pain is now determining an ever greater number of people that somehow it must be prevented; a less, but an ever-growing number also believes that social reform is not only desirable but possible, though here the division of opinion becomes so sharp and hot as to make hope of sufficient agreement a still very distant prospect. The very presence of a considerable opinion which holds that social organization must always involve inequalities and injustices pulls us up sharply to recognize that there is some dubiety, as well as extreme difficulty, about the task to which so many are now turning as a substitute for religion.

But let us take what is apparently the simplest problem first. The attempt to relieve, and eventually eliminate human pain resolves itself into a choice between deadening the pain and removing the cause, though this choice is no longer an absolute alternative; pain that can be immediately relieved by an anæsthetic everyone agrees should be so relieved, but such a relief is, of course,

bound to be temporary, so that, at the same time, we must endeavour to eliminate the cause. The attack upon pain must therefore eventually undertake a further attack upon disease. But the moment this is realized, we discover that we have set ourselves to an enormous task. Modern medicine is to be congratulated upon the fact that it has mastered some diseases, and indeed prevented their recurrence, if only the observance of sanitary laws and reasonable hygiene can be maintained. Other diseases, however, not only still maintain their hold, but are increasing; for it is discovered that while some diseases are the result of the want of civilization, some are due to civilization itself. Therefore the elimination of disease demands certain reforms in the way of human living, for which neither a return to uncivilization, nor our present civilization will suffice; and these reforms may be found to involve not only much restraint, but considerable personal sacrifice on the part of the whole community. For instance, intemperance and sexual promiscuity will need to be abandoned before we can hope to eliminate some of our worst diseases. This means that human nature has to be changed in many people, and social responsibility has immensely to be increased in us all. But further, not only has psychic pain come to be recognized as a disease that clamours for relief, but it is recognized that the propensity to disease often lies far back in the psychic personality itself;

that worry and anxiety may expose the physical frame to the incursion of disease, which a happier and healthier state of mind would prevent. The rise of differing systems like Christian Science, New Thought and the various schools of mental therapeutics, all of which regard a right mental attitude as a prophylactic, an aid or even a remedy for all diseases, indicate that disease is being tracked to its ultimate source, namely, the state of the mind. A state of mind, free from debilitating cares and fretful anxieties, is, however, one that it is very difficult for most persons to attain; here we are back upon the need of changing human nature, at least so far as altering the habits of the mind.

When we turn to the curse to humanity that war has now become, we are all vividly aware of this because of our experience of the great World War. But although the immensity of its horrors and the incidence of its infliction have roused nearly all the world to the menace that war has now become to the very continuance of humanity, not only have no means been discovered to prevent its recurrence, and that on a vastly more terrible scale, but there are still many people who hold that war will never be eliminated, unless human nature can be fundamentally changed; for which, however, they have not much hope. The propensity to strife is in us all, and while some hold this propensity to be incited by imperfect systems of government, (monarchy is

specially singled out for blame) and some trace it to economic competition, others declare that it arises from the desire of man to dominate his fellows, this in turn largely motivated by the fear that if he does not do so they will only dominate him. Freedom for anyone can only be gained by fighting; and freedom for all is a fiction. Since the calamity of the Great War, greater, more serious, and more concerted efforts have been made, if not to find a complete insurance against war, yet at least to confine it to infrequent occasions and limited areas. Yet the earnest, representative and organized efforts now embodied in the League of Nations have certainly not yet found a way, not only of preventing war, but even of circumscribing its area; for although occasions that might have led to war have already been overcome by the League's provisions and good offices, the conditions actually demanded by the Covenant, if war should break out, are bound to involve all the signatories. It needs also to be recognized that it is unlikely that one small power would ever expose itself to the easily repressive action of all the remaining powers, whereas the recalcitrance of one of the greater powers, or, what any such power would first scheme to secure, namely, a combination of resistance, would inevitably involve a "world war" of even greater dimension than the last. For not only have we still to learn how to inhibit those schemes of politicians which, sometimes beyond their

actual intentions, excite the animosities of other countries, but we have to learn how to govern the passions of the people, which are always so easily aroused when it is imagined that national honour is at stake. And we have now to safeguard ourselves from those new forces of international finance which can threaten the prosperity, liberty, and even the life of whole masses of mankind by the control they can exert. Meantime every attempt even to approximate to disarmament, and thus reduce the dangerous combustible material which it is now recognized that the piling up of armaments constitutes, shows how unwilling the nations are to part with what they believe is the only efficient insurance against war, although it is almost certainly one of the chief causes of its precipitation. The difficulty in the way of getting rid of war is that modern developments, which link the nations in closer contact and mass the thoughts of men through the Press, seem at the same time to forge a psychological chain that makes war even more inevitable; and any attempt to break that chain demands that the psychology of human nature has to be changed.

If it were possible to believe that humanity is even near to finding a solution of the growing menace of international warfare, another problem is beginning to show itself, which threatens even more danger, and may prove even more insoluble, namely, economic

strife. Economic strife has always existed among men; there has never yet been constructed a social order that did not involve some form or degree of slavery; but with the development of industrial civilization, with its huge demands for raw material and cheap labour, and with the combination of the capitalistic forces on one side and the proletarian forces on the other, a new warfare is threatening, and already developing, which cuts across the perpendicular hostilities of national patriotisms with a new horizontal division of international class distinction, is accompanied by an intense class consciousness, and is incited by the preaching of class warfare as the only way to the establishment of social justice. The gradual evolution of civilized peoples into two groups, those who possess capital and those who do not, though crossed by numerous affiliations, and the distinction blurred by a middle class, seems to be an indisputable and rapidly developing tendency. The segregation is psychologically hardened by fear on the one side and hate on the other, while the sporadic attempts at rebellion or suppression are working up to some cataclysm, of which the course of the Russian Revolution, and the disturbance which has begun in China, and is penetrating elsewhere, provide some measure of what may be possible when these are extended to a world-wide class war.

While it may be open to debate whether the pro-

ductivity of humanity is outrunning the productivity of nature; whether the very tendency of capitalistic finance is not tempting whole peoples away from producing real wealth to living on credit; and whether the natural tendency of industrialism is not, while making luxuries cheaper, to make necessities dearer, and so, with its careless neglect of cultivating those things that can be replaced and its destruction of those things that cannot, is now heading for world-starvation; it is nevertheless a fact that an ever-increasing mass of humanity is becoming restive under what it feels to be conditions equivalent to slavery; and in order to secure its freedom is now undermining the stability of modern society by the promulgation of subversive doctrines, and threatening to overturn the existing order by peaceful and evolutionary, or by hostile and revolutionary measures. It is idle to hope that the warning that such methods can only bring chaos and starvation to all, including the classes that expect to benefit, will suffice to prevent revolution, or to think that repression can permanently succeed. When vast masses of the people are beneath the poverty line, or are always near to precariousness and insecurity, the risks of further poverty and uncertainty are not so alarming as they are to those who are accustomed to plenty and security. Just as, in international warfare, nations will venture on enormous risks of suffering, defeat and bondage, either on what they con-

ceive to be the interests of justice or because they are determined on revenge, so the spirit that has inspired so much military warfare with idealism or with anger is now stirring up economic warfare throughout the whole civilized world. Moreover, it is little realized not only on how fickle a basis society rests, namely, the disposition of the majority of mankind to go on working without asking for what end, or for whose profit, but how easily it can be overturned by a minority, if only it can secure the service of the military; and since the majority of the military are recruited from the very classes that are growing so restive, the reliance on their protective power is dependent upon a very shaky loyalty to a class not their own; hence the panic to which wakeful authorities are naturally subject when doctrines subversive of the accepted order are disseminated among the forces necessary for its protection.

It is becoming quite obvious that only one or two courses are open if this new threat to humanity is to be averted. The alternatives are: (1) violent suppression, which most thoughtful people recognize is not only hopeless, but is likely to precipitate what at best it can only postpone; (2) the acceptance of the doctrine that the majority must remain dependent and relatively poor, since the destruction or overturning of the few rich and employing persons would do nothing for the majority but only plunge all into more distress;

whereas, if dependence is only accepted, industry can be reorganized on a scientific basis, a higher standard for the dependents may be obtained, with the possibility that those with real ability shall also have the opportunity of becoming masters; (3) some agreed but radical reorganization of society with a much nearer approximation to equality both of work and reward, responsibility and privilege. It is this last programme which alone fires the hopes of those who not only seek justice, but who love fellowship, and see in the present economic order a contempt for the individual, the denial of human values, and the destruction of faith. Yet how to secure such a change without at the same time changing human nature is a desperate problem; we should certainly have to change human opinion at a point where not only selfishness but security is involved. Many fear that any such dreamed of order of society would entail a vast bureaucracy, involving every one in a servile state, whatever the position they held; while any method which allowed more freedom, such as the older conception of communism envisaged, in addition to the destruction of the incentive of large private gains, would also be compelled to refrain from using any coercion to force men to work; when all motives to labour would have vanished until starvation threatened. Of course, if all men could be taught to labour hard, not for their own benefit only, but for the

benefit of the whole community, a much more equal and free, and therefore stabler, society could be conceived; but this would involve a great change in human nature.

Is it likely that we can expect any such change in human nature, or believe it to be possible without religion? Would not the decay of all religion mean that the supreme motive to human betterment would be destroyed, since the absence of any ultimate aim for existence would naturally depress men to despair; and would not the abandonment of the Christian religion in particular, since it proclaims that it can change human nature, remove the sole hope of effecting what is most needed? To ask such questions to-day is to provoke the instant and indignant affirmation in many circles that religion has been one of the most prolific causes of resisting social advance, while it has proved itself incapable of changing human nature; therefore it is either necessary to exterminate religion as a hindrance to humanity, or to treat it as irrelevant to human advancement, which would be for the majority in our generation to conclude that it could safely be ignored. Such affirmations raise questions concerning the interpretation of history and the influence of religion, which would demand a minute examination of historical evidence to rebut or confirm, as well as an agreement as to what is to be attributed to religion and what to its cor-

ruptions. But it is evident that even if there are not yet enough people in the world who believe that the forcible repression of religion is so necessary to the advancement of mankind as to make this policy accepted and successful, there are many more who believe that religion is so open to criticism, so productive of strife, and so susceptible to corruption, that no reliance can be placed upon it for reforming or even for protecting society; while a still greater number regard it, as far as practical affairs are concerned, as ineffective and irrelevant, of no more influence or concern in the world than, say, philosophy or poetry; for those who enjoy that sort of thing, legitimate, so long as it is not taken too seriously or allowed to interfere with the main business of life.

A virile faith would prefer the world to adopt the attitude that religion is something to be got rid of at all costs; and would confidently challenge anyone to attempt the task, being certain that suppression, persecution or martyrdom would only make religion once again a flaming reality, a glorious adventure, and the one thing worth either living or dying for. It is the other assumption, that religion is irrelevant, which is not only chilling to religious fervour, but must inevitably reduce all interest in religion, when, as now, the demands for relief, deliverance and improvement are pressing for an answer, if life is to be endured, or to

endure. Since there is some general agreement that great changes are necessary in human life, and these must involve great changes in human nature, we must know what else we can look to if real changes are to be effected; if not to religion, then where? The only substitute than can reasonably be suggested is education. Man needs to be educated into the belief that personal health, international peace and social justice are feasible and desirable things. It is quite possible that the effects of education have been greatly underestimated.⁶ It is proved that a whole nation can in a generation be educated into the belief in its own greatness or into clamouring for revenge. It is quite possible that a system of education could undermine all religious belief, not only by overt attack upon the foundations of religion, but simply by leaving it out of account. But is it possible to conceive of education alone lifting man up to great heights of sacrifice, adventure or reform? It is quite obvious that to produce such results it would first be necessary to secure a uniform system of education, which would be agreed upon by experts and taught by enthusiasts; such a system, however, demands a clear correspondence with facts and a profound conviction that the facts are a basis for hope. It is, however, confidently believed by some that the record of human progress is, of itself, so inspiring that it can give rise to the idea that

⁶ See Benjamin Kidd's "Science of Power."

humanity is capable of much further progress, and that none of its hopes are beyond possibility.⁷

But in considering the record of past human life as an incentive to further effort, a number of disconcerting facts will have to be faced. It will soon become apparent that, while civilization has advanced materially, there has not been an equal moral advance: the same weaknesses dog and flout, deflect and destroy nations as well as individuals. If man has developed physically, there has not been the same spiritual development; for the animal traits remain in him, and his savage inheritance is easily reverted to. If, again, his mental capacity has indisputably developed, yet the old questions he has asked remain unanswered and rise as persistently; namely, whence comes life and what is it for? It is these questions that religion has claimed to answer, and any study of the past must take note of the effect that these answers have had on the mind of man; even if it is concluded that the answers are wrong or the questions unanswerable. Moreover, quite apart from those wonderful monuments of strength and beauty which religion has left still standing in the fanes erected for the worship of God and the tombs which speak of man's hopes beyond; and in addition to the loveliness and delight enshrined in pictures and music, whose expres-

⁷ Cf. Mr. H. G. Wells's general and well-known belief, and the foundations on which he bases them: see his works, *passim*.

sion was due to religious ideas,⁸ religion has left traces in the mind of man of comfort and inspiration, and these derived not only from dreams of the past, for its hopes concerning the future have been the subject of its most gloriously expressed convictions.

The dreams inspired by religion, however symbolically expressed, clearly affirm that mankind is in some way descended from God and once lived in communion with Him; and they picture a life beyond this in which that communion will be restored and consummated. It is in connection with such beliefs that we also find the expectation that here on earth there shall be some restoration of that original condition and some anticipation of that final happiness. It cannot be doubted that it is the expectation of the Messianic Age voiced by the Hebrew prophets, and of the Kingdom of God by the Christian Evangelists, which have been the chief source of those ideals of peace and prosperity, happiness and justice, which are now both firing and disturbing mankind. Is it possible to lift these hopes from their original context of faith, deny that belief which was the basis of their inspiration, and present them to men as still true and realizable, although the foundations on which they

⁸ So much so that since the study of Christian art has so often led to an acceptance of Christian belief, in some of the secular schools of France the study of art was at one time deprecated because of its inevitable introduction to religious ideas.

rest are found to be false and the power by which they were to be established is found to have no existence? The matter needs to be put into a form that will make the issue more striking to the modern mind, which is now far removed not only from acceptance of, but from acquaintance with the Biblical literature. To make the issue clear to the greatest number it is not sufficient to express it in the theological form that, if the two great beliefs of religion, the existence of God and the immortality of man are found false, or are ruled out as irrelevant and ineffective, man cannot go on hoping and labouring. To make the issue widely realized it has to be asked whether, in a universe that came from no preceding mind or conscious purpose, we have any right to expect that when a creature like man, whose real beginning and inevitable end are so otherwise, can imagine such arrant nonsense about his origin and future existence, the dream that there can be better conditions on earth has any sounder basis, or more hope of realization. It is certainly not provable from the past history, or from the present condition of mankind, that economic prosperity can be made accessible, not to say secure, for all. It is true there does seem to be a bountiful provision in nature's resources, if only these could be developed by a combination of labour and knowledge, and distributed where they were needed. Indeed it seems theoretically quite feasible that with the develop-

ment of science and invention, and with the possibilities of modern transport and communication, these vast resources could be made universally available, granted a control and organization directed solely by the motive of satisfying human need. Even with a motive that is indisputably quite other, namely the making of financial profit, and directed simply by the aim of marketing goods where the best prices can be obtained, an enormous productivity is stimulated; and with almost no communal control or much central co-ordinated co-operation, goods from the ends of the earth are deposited at our very doors. Seeing however that this system also involves enormous waste both of goods and labour, loads some with plenty and leaves others seriously impoverished, it has seemed to one theorist after another an entirely simple as well as a business-like proposal, quite apart from considerations of justice or without appealing to brotherhood, to establish central control, a co-operative system, corporate ownership, and either the readjustment, or the complete elimination, of financial exchange. Yet the slightest endeavours in this direction not only arouse the opposition of vested interests and mass together the majority of individuals to protect their property and rights, but the theoretical examination of such possibilities is to many conclusive that no system of government could undertake or control any such system, which would only create armies

of bureaucrats, necessitate the curtailment of all individual liberty, and destroy the only effective motives of human energy, namely personal gain and the fear of starvation. Guarantee everybody plenty, or even a bare sufficiency, and every one will begin to slacken the efforts that alone can create them. Even if the resources of nature were enough to provide a high level of plenty for every one, which, if humanity continues to multiply at the recent rate, seems to many not merely questionable, but an alarming impossibility, the factors introduced by human nature, namely avarice and laziness, prevent any possible, certain or just solution of the economic problem. The present individual system works because it rewards avarice and penalizes laziness: any collective system would have to penalize avarice, and would tend to reward laziness.

But while the majority of mankind persistently hold to these opinions, a minority, constantly growing, motivated by a desire to escape from their own enslaved, precarious or impoverished condition, and stimulated by an opposite theory, forcefully expounded and proclaimed as the true gospel of humanity, are convinced that mankind can exist on a radically different economic basis, and are determined to bring this about by creating a world-wide revolution, gradual, agreed and peaceful, or immediate, coercive and violent. After passing through various stages of development, theoretical

and political, it is clear to any wide observation that the one movement which is at present growing in intensity, attraction and power, is that which holds that the economic emancipation of mankind can only be gained by immediate and violent measures, in which patience or pity must be forsworn; for those at present in power and possession will never consent to any such change, and must therefore not only be coerced but eliminated. Because of the methods that will have to be employed, as well as because religion has been utilized, so it is held, to sanction the present order, preaches submission, or stupefies the poor with promises of prosperity only beyond the grave, it is coming to be inevitably associated with all such economic theories that the extermination of religion must be also attempted, and that by any means. Therefore all the doubts of the centuries, the destructive arguments of rationalism, science and criticism, the suggestion that religion is a priestly invention, Christianity a myth mistaken for history, and piety a combination of hypocrisy, phantasy, and auto-suggestion; all this is being adopted as one of the strongest weapons for attacking the present order of society, while at the same time, the evangelistic fervour, the personal sacrifice, the hostility to "the world," a rigid and rational orthodoxy, and loyalty to the organization, hitherto associated with religion, are being taken over from it as its only assets, but on a completely secular,

atheistic and humanitarian basis, which it is believed alone can revive, use and inspire them.

No doubt there are many people who feel that this is a movement which is only froth and fury, to be easily laughed out of countenance, rendered powerless by the common sense of the average person, and, if likely to prove dangerous, rationally refuted, outwitted by political manœuvres or, if necessary, repressed by police and military action. But there have been enough revolutions in history, some of them sufficiently recent, and now the Russian, just carried through on this very basis, to provoke a more serious estimate of this phenomenon. The growing and intractable problem of unemployment, the ugliness of our industrial centres, the filthy slums of our cities, made even more unendurable by education and the contrast of contiguous comfort, beauty and luxury, offer a ground for revolutionary doctrines and generate a hate for the existing order, that only needs leadership to direct, and a favourable opportunity in order to seize power, and attempt to put these theories into practice, even if the only result is a general conflagration in which everything is destroyed. For it must be remembered that the basis of modern society is more than precarious; it is manifestly unstable and seriously endangered. Industrial civilization is living on credit, whose value would simply disappear with industrial stoppage; it depends for its supplies on the willing

labour of the working classes, and, as we have already noticed, for its protection on police and military forces which are drawn from those very classes, and at any acute or prolonged crisis might side with them. These facts are not only enough to call for considerable vigilance from modern governments, and to rouse considerable alarm in excitable and imaginative minds, but they must cause no little anxiety to those who take long views, and desire the best for humanity; for whatever their eventual outcome, it means the hindrance of all understanding, and the destruction of all fellowship.

Our concern is with the introduction of this new factor into the whole religious question. It constitutes but one more item in the general confusion of our times, which it will require patience and much more than patience, to straighten out. For there will be those who will take advantage of the coalition between socialistic and anti-religious theories, to call for the repudiation of them both, and for the creation of a counter-combination of religious and anti-socialistic forces as a protection, which will therefore attempt to revive that type of religion which is most conservative, other-worldly, and submissive, for its inspiration and sanction. It is questionable whether it is possible at this time to rally humanity with such a cry, or for such a combination to be powerful enough to protect the present order. It must be remembered that the dispossessed

and discontented classes form a large proportion of modern industrial civilization, that resentment is turning into hate, and hate into a desire for vengeance and destruction, and the movement will hardly be restrained by the warning, even if it is believed to be true, that those who experiment with revolution will only destroy themselves and reduce every one to an even lower standard, perhaps for centuries. Our concern is rather with the fact that in the more impatient ranks of this movement and, in proportion, where more moderate counsels prevail, another element is added to the anti-religious movement of our times, not only presenting a barrier to religious appeal of extraordinary hardness and violent antagonism, but converting considerable numbers of the working classes to the belief that religion is no concern of theirs save as their worst enemy: indifference to religion is breaking down, but into hostility.

These considerations might well give pause to those intellectuals who, often with little sense of responsibility, have helped to undermine the reality of religion by their sometimes captious criticisms, objections and scepticism; and might convince those who have been so indifferent to the claims of religion, or even those who, while not rejecting it, have left its support and propagation to others, that here is something they cannot afford any longer to neglect. But while we are natu-

rally concerned that those who are sceptical and indifferent should be won to religious faith, there would be nothing to be welcomed in a return to religion merely for its social values, or with the idea that it can provide the best sanction and buttress of the present order of society. There would be in such a return to religion no religious value; in fact it would not be a return to religion at all. It should be remembered that it has more than once before been recommended that religion should be retained, not because of its rational reality, or even as a personal conviction, but solely because it alone can provide a social cement and keep the subversive elements of society in their place. Moreover, Christianity is no longer available for this purpose. There is a growing conviction and widening agreement among earnest and thoughtful Christians that our present social order is unworthy of Christianity, that economic injustice is cutting at the roots of religious fellowship, and is therefore making communion with God impossible; not only because it destroys our peace, and disturbs our devotion, but because it is a recognized article of the Christian religion that God will enter into no relations with those who participate in injustice or are willingly estranged from their fellows. Economic injustice is one of the greatest solvents of present-day faith: consciously prohibiting it with those who suffer under it, and unconsciously inhibiting it in those who acquiesce in it.

A further and more immediately pressing question has however to be raised. It must be recognized that there will be considerable difficulty in establishing world peace or social justice without a great change in personal valuations and the economic basis of society. But let us for the moment suppose that even in the absence of any assurance that this universe contains any provision, discloses any purpose, or holds out any promise of such possibilities, man will refuse to be discouraged from attempting, and in considerable degree will actually achieve the realization of his hopes; that man, strong in the conviction that he is an insurgent and creative person, able to mould things to his will, and that although there may be no God, can himself become the God which he has imagined; is it conceivable that, with a world cleansed of poverty and pain, man will then be content to settle down to a secular existence, where social betterment becomes his sole and sufficient task, and in place of any hope of personal immortality, he will find satisfaction in contemplating the immortality of the race? It is indisputable that, in the past, man has been strengthened by the belief that there was a Mind greater than his own which had so planned this life that by obedience to its purpose and in communion with that divine mind, life could not only be endured, but conquered. This belief at once gave ground for his hopes and encouragement to his

struggles, while the idea that the hardships, failures and temptations that remained in this life irremovable, would in another life be crowned with the reward of perfection, communion and bliss, comforted him, and made endurance of evil and the struggle after holiness worth while. If these ideas and hopes of the future are now to be dismissed as mistaken fancies and vain dreams, will not the very ground of all ideas and hopes be gone? Rationalists and humanitarians often profess themselves indignant that it should even be suggested that human goodness depends upon the promise of future rewards or the threat of future punishment; and it may be admitted that the way in which these motives have been insisted on by some religious apologists as the sole spring of human goodness has been crude and offensive. Understanding of the real issue has been hindered by completely postponing the experience of eternal life to a future existence, and by thinking of the heavenly reward as something alien to what real religion desires, and quite other than the rewards and ameliorations that religion gives in this life. In Christianity, at any rate, the only reward for being religious in this life is the promise of being more religious in the next: the attainment of perfect holiness and perfect communion with God, from which there flows solely, though inevitably, perfect bliss. It may be that the rewards promised in a future life have often signally

failed to motive very effectively those who have actually believed in those promises; though this was often because the nature of the reward was almost entirely misunderstood, or its reality had been insufficiently anticipated in this life to make it seem above all things desirable. But the removal of even this only partially effective motive might have disastrous effects; and this, not because it would mean good people would no longer continue to be good, or evil men would immediately become worse; it would cut much deeper than the moral level; as we have laboured to show, it would attack the rational basis of life.

It must be pointed out, however, that already, as a consequence of this general scepticism, the existence of any moral standards is now being seriously questioned in many quarters. The idea of an absolute standard of morality, since this can only rest on the fact that ultimate reality, infinite mind and supreme goodness coincide in God, is of course surrendered if there is no God. A rational basis for morals depends upon the validity of rational thought, which we have seen also depends upon God. A morality dependent upon what is good for society as a whole, not only waits upon general agreement as to what that is, but is challenged by those who do not care for society as a whole, but only for themselves, and who ask by what rational argument it can be established that one should sacrifice one's own conviction of what

is good for oneself, for such a valueless, disagreed and indeterminate standard as the good of society as a whole. There is no answer forthcoming on these lines; many are taking advantage of the fact and are living for themselves, determined to satisfy every rising passion, and to extract pleasure from life at any price.

At the present moment, however, modern man does not seem to be much concerned for the rational validity of things. He has moved away somewhat from the rationalism of last century; indeed he has even come to take refuge in something that is much more like irrationalism. It used to be the argument of the sceptic that rationalism disproved the idea of God by showing that it was impossible; and in recent years theologians were inclined to agree so far that rational arguments could not establish the existence of God; but now both modern scepticism and modern religion have almost agreed that rationalism itself is either a mistaken demand or an impossible dream of the human mind. Nevertheless, sooner or later, it will become apparent to all who want to think, if only about practical or secular affairs, that some faith in mind, and some appeal to agreed principles, must be possible; for scepticism has now proceeded so far that not merely religion, philosophy and science, but even psychology and economics are left without any guidance save desire and impulse, whose genesis and goal respectively are beyond our under-

standing; which means, in short, that there is nothing to guide man save interior balance and social stability; all else is barren questioning to which neither mind nor life can return an answer. This spells the wreckage of every mental construction of mankind; not only those which religion, but also those which science has made. The great problems of where and whither, as well as why and wherefore are meaningless as well as unanswerable. For how can the mind that has evolved from the mindless have any guarantee that its own conclusions have any validity other than those which mindless nature imposes on the product of its evolutions? It cannot be said that nature does this for its own purposes; mere nature has none.

If the human mind can be any longer regarded as a mind, instead of the mere predetermined effect of something essentially mindless, it is obvious that its conclusions must be useless, whatever they may be, for they do not correspond to anything outside itself. A purely subjectivist philosophy and a purely analytical psychology have conspired, however unconsciously, to reduce the value of all human thought; and it must soon be realized, even by their exponents, that they have consequently deprived both the subjectivist philosophy and the analytical psychology of any value whatsoever. Man is a creature full of irrational desires at hopeless war with his environment; the practical problem of life

is to prevent these from developing an interior conflict that will wreck the mind, or an exterior economic strife that will wreck society. Psycho-therapeutics undertakes to prevent the one, and economic rationalization the other, and thus it is believed that if man will not only abandon the religious answer to the questions of the mind, but refuse even to ask them, he will be able to strike a balance between his interior and his exterior life, achieve secular happiness, and be content. What ground there actually is for the hope of complete success in these two directions is not clear; and may not this one remaining hope be another of those dreams that man must learn to distrust? Complete success on these lines is certainly far away at present; if it could be achieved, then something that has never before happened in history, namely permanent happiness for the individual and permanent stability for society would have been gained. The past therefore gives us no guarantee for such hopes; and this future achievement, it must be noted, is only promised if man can completely repress the ancient and deeply embedded ideas of a Divine Companion, a Mind that understands and a Love that can satisfy, as well as the hope that there is a life beyond to compensate for earth's disappointments and to consummate earth's strivings. It must be recognized that no belief in a Purpose in nature, or a Life Force that may one day evolve something worthy, can be substituted;

such exceptions are only the dilution or the residuum of the idea of God, and have neither meaning nor value if that idea be rejected. And any idea that the welfare of posterity will be a sufficient substitute for personal immortality as the goal of all striving, only raises the question, What then is the goal of posterity? Apart from the fact that science gives no assurance that the human race will find a permanent home on this planet, even if that could be guaranteed, what would be the value or meaning of a procession of lives, however progressively improved, when personality, by which all progress is registered and tested, is fated to disappear and doomed to non-existence? With the increasing development of personality, the question would become so insistent that it would only create such a sense of despair as would make personality itself an intolerable burden. A world in which mind has emerged by accident or necessity from mindless material is a maddening and irrelievable tragedy; and the more the mind develops the more the tragedy of a meaningless world and a purposeless existence will weigh upon the mind. The call to face this pessimistic conclusion with courageous patience will be a vain exhortation; for who can tell, with a mind that has such origins, whether even the conclusion, which it is so difficult to be patient with, is itself true?

Meanwhile, before it comes to be realized that such

conclusions are as impossible to prove as they are to endure, it must be admitted that the very promise that, nevertheless, interior conflict and social strife can be ended by non-religious means, has only made both more intense. At present, psycho-therapeutics has made more people conscious of their maladjustment than it has cured; while the economic theory that a state of society is within reach where justice will bring peace, is the most disturbing and disruptive idea that could well be started. All such promises must so far precede realization that they only create hectic struggle and strife in the endeavour to attain it; with a corresponding despair when it is found how difficult the actual attainment is. And where there is nothing but human effort to look to or appeal to; when the past history of mankind shows how slowly external improvement has taken place; how much of it has been merely superficial, and has contributed nothing to interior happiness; and how reforms, if not hampered by reaction and defect, are counterbalanced by the emergence of some new evil; it is becoming clearer that these secular hopes have all the postponement and illusion that has been charged against religion; they equally have no basis whatever in reality, and in the place of the hope of eternal realization there is substituted, under the deceptive guise of a perpetual approximation to an infinite goal, what is really only an eternal postponement of hope. A much

braver facing of the situation than some of our modern pessimistic realists have considered has yet to be undertaken, namely that which sees man doomed to ever greater strife, within and without, with no prospect whatever of it ever reaching any settlement, and the only relief conceivable, that of man becoming reconciled to ceaseless strife and increasing pain; in short an endless hell for humanity as such, with the sole consolation that for each individual it will not last for ever. If such ideas do not promote individual suicide, they will certainly accelerate racial suicide.

If men, however, turn away from such conclusions, as they will; for hope springs eternal in the human breast; and still expect that progress, even if it destroys the idea of religion, will bring humanity at last to a secular happiness with which man will by then have learned to content himself; then it needs to be remembered, even if it were true that the part that religion has played in progress has been only to act as a drag upon it, so that now that religion is being removed progress will only leap forward with accelerated pace, it would still have to be admitted that religion has made man content with the lack of progress or with its slow advance in the past. And if some are certain that without religion man will progress faster, will the rate be sufficient to satisfy man, apart from the consolations and assurances of personal or corporate realization that reli-

gion alone promises? It can be shown, moreover, that it is a secret dissatisfaction of the soul that is responsible for the corruption that easily turns progress into a further multiplication of earthly evils, and is a constantly originating cause of physical disease, international strife and social unrest. It is because man is intensely unhappy that he attempts to satisfy his soul by satisfying his body, then overeats or overdrinks, and so inflicts his body with diseases, or creates false appetites which nothing can satisfy. It is because of the same interior dispeace that man is filled with fear of his neighbour, and so sets out, either to defend himself against him, or to dominate him, thus producing all the conditions that lead to international warfare. The same conflict, operating through the endeavour to find security and happiness in material possessions, works itself out in the social disorder which is now such a menace. And yet many modern theorists imagine that all international and social strife can be cured without changing man's interior condition. It is obvious that at present we are only driving man's diseases inward, from the body to the mind, and the efforts to cure these apart from, or in opposition to religion are only likely to disorder personality in the attempt. Again, our efforts to end strife by purely secular means, are only driving the danger from the international into the social realm, where it threatens to bring about not merely the com-

plete undermining of our present social order, which needs reforming more than conserving, but the destruction of that by which alone any social solidarity can be achieved. For the fellowship of man with man can only be based upon an inherent brotherhood derivable from a divine origin and consummated in divine communion. The only alternative proposed is to base brotherhood upon our animal origin and make its realization depend upon economic equality, a programme which confessedly envisages a class conflict, when triumph can only be achieved by murdering about a third of the human race; and that almost certainly to be followed by an individual conflict of even greater intensity, since the economic level with which all will have to be content, individuals will always be rebelling against, unless there is something beyond economic justice to inspire and satisfy the soul.

The abandonment of religion, to which so much in modern thought, interest and life seems to be tending, means the undermining of every rational interpretation of existence, the negating of any hope of reaching secular stability, and the destruction of the compensating spiritual treasures which might make man content: it is therefore making for nothing else and nothing less than irrationality, madness, strife and unendurable misery.

IV

THE PROSPECTS OF RECOVERY

WE have accepted the widely-felt concern that the present condition of religion is critical as warranted by the general situation; with certain qualifications, however, which, it is hoped, will satisfy the anti-alarmist and yet not allow the complacent to go to sleep: namely, that the condition, particularly, of the Christian religion, has always been, and always will be critical. We have endeavoured to show that what constitutes the present crisis in religion is that tendencies are at work in modern thought and life which, if unchecked, will bring about the disappearance of religion. These must be estimated at their full possibility, and serious measures will have to be adopted if their further destructive effect is to be resisted; and while there are hopeful tendencies also at work, these need to be directed, co-ordinated and immensely strengthened if religion is not merely to resist the hostile influences acting upon it, but to rise to meet the ever-growing needs of humanity.

To discuss the prospects of recovery suggests something like a medical consultation round a sick man's

bed, and the metaphor may be useful in order to envisage the exact situation; for while it is not that of specialists having to be called in to see whether anything can be suggested to save a patient from threatened death, a consultation is necessary to see how a crisis can be helped through; the crisis consisting in the fact that certain poisons are threatening the health, and unless counteracted, the life of the body; and that while the ordinary forces of life can be counted on, and the patient has youth on his side, mere restoration is not sufficient, because the patient has to face a heavier task than ever before. A fatal issue is possible, though there is no immediate danger of that; recovery is possible, and is the more likely; but there must be not only recovery from this present sickness, but a reinvigoration which will banish weakness and increase the present stores of energy in order to meet the increasing strain and the growing demands of life.

If this metaphor has served to indicate how we view the present condition of religion, we can now drop it, in order to investigate more closely, and under its own distinctive terminology, what are the hopes we have that religion will not only survive the attacks that are being made upon it, but if the right measures are taken, can summon forces to its aid, and launch a counter-attack that may lead to a decided advance, register a glorious victory, and bring the final triumph nearer.

The dangers have, we believe, been fairly faced, without either exaggeration or underestimate of their possibilities, in the previous chapter, and nothing more is now needed save the briefest reminiscent summary of them. The positive dangers threatening religion are always the same, namely, unbelief and hostility. These elements are undoubtedly present, but how far they extend, or how threatening they are, it is difficult to determine. Positive unbelief in religion of any kind does not find many exponents who, because of the intellectual capacity they display, or the influence they exert, must be given serious consideration. If there are any such persons they are probably less numerous than they were, say, in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. The hostility to religion developed in modern communistic movements is not based upon anything strictly intellectual, but rather upon the assumption that religion sanctions the present order of society, and would not sanction the methods which would have to be used to overturn the existing order. This somewhat new combination of hostility to the present social order and to conventional religion will not, therefore, secure the patronage of many thinkers whose opposition to religion has been based upon purely intellectual grounds. Convinced atheists, or agnostics, as no doubt most would prefer to be called, are apt to be as divided as pious believers on economic questions, and many of

them hold quite conventional social views. There are bitter atheists whose atheism is only a consequence of their economic theories; but there are not many atheists who, as a consequence of their unbelief, have adopted advanced social views. Even those among them who may desire some different order of society will generally hasten to dissociate themselves from violent methods: most of them profess themselves to be humanitarians, and therefore shrink from the cruelty and misery that revolution would entail.¹ Although the more extreme communists have therefore taken over as useful ammunition the materialistic science and the myth theories put forward during the last fifty years, they cannot claim that the exponents of these types of unbelief would have supported their economic faith. It is possible that this new combination of hostility to religion and society will start some interesting reactions among modern unbelievers. Nevertheless, the massing of an attitude vehemently hostile to religion constitutes a serious hindrance to religious recovery; and although its determination to eliminate religion is a childish threat, whatever means it may decide to use, it does present a barrier to any kind of religious appeal, unless that can claim to carry with it some kind of social reformation, superior to anything proposed, and far

¹ Cf. Mr. Bertrand Russell's attitude to the Russian Revolution in his "Essays on Freedom."

more likely to endure. It may well be that definitely propagandist atheism, as such, has become elsewhere less prominent, because it is realized that the proclamation of undiluted atheism is only likely to provoke violent reaction into belief; for the devastating prospect of a godless world, if seriously faced, is enough to make anyone believe; so depressing to all human hopes and destructive of all human rationality are the conclusions of atheism.

Indeed, on the purely intellectual plane, it may be fairly maintained that the battle is going hard against any atheism that endeavours to support itself on a materialistic basis. Materialism is a theory that must be unacceptable to any philosophic mind, because it denies mind; and that this deprives materialism of being an intellectual solution of any validity, may be assumed to be self-evident. We have therefore only to get anyone really to think to prevent him *thinking* himself into materialism: for whatever materialism is, it cannot be a system of *thought*. It is less obvious, however, that scientific materialism, in professing to have explained the universe as a materialistic mechanism, is equally self-contradictory, and this because it generally disclaims any interest in metaphysical questions; that is, it claims to evade an issue which it then claims to have solved. It apparently also does not occur to those who propound these mechanistic explanations, that the very

existence of a mechanism as vast as this universe, which corrects and repairs itself, and produces an ever more perfect article, namely, mind, is anything but an obvious proof that no mind is required to have designed such a machine. Paley's famous argument from the finding of a watch to the positing of a watchmaker, although rightly discredited by those who refused to regard the world as a watch, or God as a watchmaker, would seem still worth some consideration from these mechanistic interpreters of the universe. When we are bidden to regard the whole universe as a gigantic machine, of incredible precision, complicated movement, and yet so simple in its design and so sure in its purpose that it can at last produce a creature like man; for even if his greatest achievement is only to discover that he is the product of a machine, such a machine, by the very extent to which the analogy is pressed, still seems to demand a mechanician, and that of amazing mechanical inventiveness. Moreover, from within the very ranks of the physicists and the mathematicians, who had hitherto combined to perfect this mechanical explanation, there is spreading a slow but unmistakable revolt; for it is found that such a machine, supposing the question of its origin by creation or otherwise could be evaded, would not work, physically or mathematically, not even on any self-contained, self-fed and self-repairing theory imaginable. It needs to be realized that

these mechanical reconstructions of the universe are, after all, mental reconstructions; the mechanical is preferred simply because it makes things more understandable to the mind of modern man; it is therefore, in its essence, something congruous to mind; so that mechanical turns out to be only another name for mental.

Intellectually, the battle against materialism is won: in the high places of the field the fight is over; but it may be long before the news, or the appreciation of what the victory means, penetrates to the masses, or even comes home to some of our modern psychologists. The masses are now getting hold of the materialistic doctrines of last century; and it is not to be wondered at that they are so behindhand, when some of its conclusions are still being published by living scientists as if they were quite new, and it had not been found necessary considerably to modify them. It may therefore be some time before we feel the benefit of the collapse of materialism, and and it becomes generally recognized that this obstacle no longer hinders a return to faith. Here, however, is a welcome tendency, though it may yet take some time to develop its full effects.

Any real return to religion is, however, considerably hindered by the existence of a number of half-way stopping-places at which the retreating forces of unbelief are inclined to halt. Just as on the way to atheism

there were approximations to the extreme position which, because they did not go the whole way, were not exposed to the violent reactions which any serious contemplation of the impossible conclusions involved would have set up; so in driving modern thought back from materialism there are still many stopping-places short of religious faith that have to be shown to be equally untenable. We have therefore now to estimate how far these half-way positions are providing stopping-places for modern thought, or are acting as stepping-stones to a further advance towards more definite religion.

We have noticed previously the tendency to hypostatize certain functions or ideas, and retain these as substitutes for a personal God, which some minds seem inclined to conclude is either an impossibility or a contradiction in terms; generally, of course, because of crude conceptions of what constitutes personality. Perhaps the most hindering of these substituted conceptions is that of the Life-force; for while it replaces the materialistic interpretation of ultimate reality by one that is vitalistic, it not only falls far short of the conception of God, but it proposes something in its place entirely hopeless from the religious point of view. For this Life-force, which surges through the universe and is regarded as its ultimate cause, while identified with the movement that is revealed by biological evolution,

is not, however, regarded as possessing any conscious or preconceived purpose; it is a movement of life that has at length developed consciousness in individual men; but that was not its original possession; that is only what it has developed through its struggles with its own materialistic environment. It must be obvious, if what we have said elsewhere is true concerning the discredit that falls on a mind which has emerged merely from material antecedents, that the same discredit attaches to a mind which has only vitalistic antecedents; what purports to be a mind, able to reason from effect to cause, is only one more example of the restless, blind urge of the Life-force, and its theories are of no more value than any other of its manifestations. This way of thinking, of course, fits in with the theories of those modern psychologists who regard our efforts at rational construction as only concealed sublimations of animal, sexual or self-assertive instincts. Such an estimate of intellectual activity seems only to be confirmed by much of our modern thought, which is content to make its standard mere novelty, brilliance or forcefulness: a mere essay in self-expression. The manifestation of this vital energy in our mental constructions, whether it claims to be included in the intellectual or the intuitionist categories, must nevertheless eventually be regarded as of no more significance than the inarticulate cries or even the physical movements

of an infant. The same discredit which is thus, though often unconsciously, thrown upon the consciousness of man, must rest also on that expected development of the Life-force in the future: the God who is not yet, but who will one day emerge. This amazing idea of an emergent God some modern philosophers seem to think conceivable and worthy of the title of deity; and yet, such an emergent being, even if, and all the more because possessing a divine consciousness, must immediately know itself to be nothing more than the product of the unconscious, dependent for its origin and basis upon a blind, biological force; not God from God, but God from not-God, when surely it would know its consciousness of divinity was a delusion, completely contradicted by its antecedents and its dependence upon them.

All such thinking can only escape its own devastating conclusions if it proposes that the antecedents of higher developments are not its actual causes; and, indeed, in this type of thinking there is a disposition to regard evolution not as the unfolding of something implicit, but as a process which actually produces something quite new, a real creation; just as if in the union of hydrogen and oxygen which results in water, the water is not to be regarded as in any sense the effect of its constituents, but something else which they actually create. This is a curious notion, and really deprives science of all

basis whatsoever. In rejecting the theological notion of the creation by God of all things from nothing, we seem first to have been urged to believe that all things can evolve from nothing, and, that proving inconceivable, we are now invited to return to the idea of creation, but now a creation of something by another *thing*, and yet without recourse either to a necessary principle or a conscious purpose. On this principle, anything can come from anything: which, although it is to be welcomed as an advance on the idea that anything can come from nothing, surely still gives us an unintelligible universe.² It is not clear whether this theory is to be traced to the intellect, which it has already been declared is useless for understanding life; whether it is to be traced to intuition, and if so, must be regarded as beyond intellectual criticism; or whether it is to be regarded as simply a clear-eyed vision of what anyhow occurs; for then it would seem to invite the simpler explanation that, if something emerged which its visible antecedents could not account for, some other causes, unobserved, must be at work, which at least must be equal to this effect. Such thinking necessitates, on its own principles, a further advance towards the idea of God.

² Whatever the engaging brilliance of Bergson's "Creative Evolution," this seems to be the great confusion and contradiction it involves; apart from the fact that this work is an attempt to discredit the intellect by intellectual methods.

Most of the substitutes proposed for the idea of a personal God often derive any meaning they may have entirely from their association with personality. It used to be the fashion in certain quarters to appeal to reason, not only to disprove the existence of God, but as the true and proper substitute for God. To govern the mind solely by the dictates of reason was the ideal of the rationalist. This alternative has gradually gone out of fashion, especially since Bergson made his great attack on the inadequacy of reason to solve many of the fundamental problems of life, on the supposition that reason is an instrument fashioned solely for dealing with material and static phenomena, and is therefore baffled by anything vital and progressive. Not a few who are anxious for the rehabilitation of religion have seized upon Bergson's depreciation of the intellect, and the exaltation of intuition, though this is almost certain to prove a dangerous ally. For while the claim to discern a certain truth intuitively, maintaining that it cannot be reached rationally, may prove a sufficient defence against the attack of the rationalist who declares he can disprove its possibility, it gives no more force to the counter-attack on anyone who declares that he cannot see it by any intuition he possesses. Therefore this argument must in the end prove valueless for any permanent religious basis or effective religious propaganda. Although some religious enthusiasts may welcome the

collapse of the older rationalist position, it probably offered a better argument with which to urge the need of faith, than the present tendency to irrationalism. And because, after some further thought, there may be a recovery of more respect for reason, it may even now be worth while pointing out possible stepping-stones which may lead from reason to faith, once reason is accepted.

It was obvious that the older rationalism, in appealing to reason, meant not only a faculty of mind, but a standard to which mind must bow, and, therefore, apparently something superior to any one human mind, or even the mind of man universally conceived; but since there could be no such thing as reason which did not belong to a mind, the exaltation of a universal reason, to which the mind of all must bow, demanded a universal Mind; which comes very near to an acknowledgment of God. Among the more cautious rationalists this conclusion was, however, easily avoided on the plea, that by reason was not meant anything apart from the mind of man, but only a convenient abstraction of a general function of the mind of man, which every mind must follow if it is to be true to its own laws. But the inherent problem of reason cannot be thus solved. It is obvious that the mind of man is not so ruled by its own rational laws that it invariably follows them; not only must each mind analyse itself very

profoundly to find there the laws it ought to follow, but it is soon discovered that it is also free not to follow them, and, indeed, often does not, through choosing to be swayed by other influences. We may leave aside, without further analysis, this curious anomaly of a mind slowly becoming aware of laws inherent in its own functions, which are nevertheless more honoured in the breach than the observance, even when it finds they are its own laws. Many take it for granted that such laws of right reasoning are discoverable, if anyone will take the trouble to attempt the task, and that, once discovered, their imperative character is admitted. But we must still ask the question whether reason is then a self-explained phenomenon, which the mind can submit itself to with the assurance that it will then be competent to test every statement, to discover if it is true, and to set out with the certainty that it can find truth itself.

The fact that the arguments employed in reasoning could sometimes be used with apparent success against declarations made in the name of religion, including one so fundamental as the affirmation of the existence of God, tempted some theologians to retreat to the position that rational arguments could never establish the existence of God, which needs to be discovered by faith. It was a little difficult to ascertain what this faculty of faith was; whether it consisted in an attitude of simply

accepting a statement made by someone else whose authority could not be questioned; or whether it was some supernatural faculty which made some things absolutely certain, but without which they could not even be discerned. The older Scholastic attitude to this problem, namely, that the existence of God could be established by reason, but that His nature and personality could only be made known by an authoritative revelation from God Himself, had come to be abandoned on the conviction that the historic proofs for the existence of God, founded upon purely rational arguments, had been proved to be invalid by those same rational processes. It is still maintained by those who stand by the Scholastic tradition that, when rightly put, the rational arguments for God's existence are indisputable; whereas those who stand by the Kantian tradition find them unconvincing. It is impossible to find anyone to adjudicate on an issue where expert rationalists disagree, and it is not our intention, even if it were in our power, to attempt to restate these arguments in the hope that they will then carry conviction to everyone, or anyone. Our present task is not to create conviction or to help forward a return to religion, but to discover what are the prospects of recovery. It is possible, however, in confining ourselves to this much more moderate and merely objective task, to inquire whether, in the progress of thought, certain considerations may

not be expected increasingly to operate and become effective. Suppose it could be admitted by the one side, what is a fact, namely, that the rational arguments for the existence of God have been questioned, and are disputed by some on what they believe to be rational grounds; so that even though they might be rationally true, yet it is impossible at present to secure any wide acceptance of them, for whatever reasons, on those grounds; is it not possible, to look for a recognition of God's existence on grounds that, although not amounting to absolute demonstration, yet have more claim to rationality than the denial of Him? Only if the affirmations and objections were perfectly balanced could we rightly remain in the attitude of absolute agnosticism; for in that case we should be warranted in saying not only that we did not know, but that we could not know. But such an exact balance of argument would be a curious and unlikely accident. Is not the general tendency of thought to-day to admit that, if reason cannot prove the existence of God, at least it cannot disprove it? And is it not becoming clear that the hypothesis of the non-existence of God leaves us with no other possible explanations of existence, save those which involve not only the contradiction of all human hope, but also the denial of all validity to human thought? If conclusions are reached which are not only themselves intolerable to contemplate, but invalidate

the premisses on which they are based, and the processes by which the conclusions are reached, it is surely necessary to re-examine both the premisses and the processes. It is this which is slowly being realized, and the general intellectual inclination of our generation seems to be that there is more to be said for some idea of God than against it.

The way is open, therefore, for a further advance towards certainty. It is possible to hope that some further examination of the problem of reason and religion will show, not only that religion has a rational basis, but that reason must assume a religious basis. But since this is a position held perhaps only by a few who believe themselves to be both religious and rational, while others would dispute their right to claim themselves either or both, this is a matter that must be left to a later stage, when we shall be free to argue for a reconsideration of this position. At present we are concerned with the prospects of recovery. But we have perhaps shown this much: that while it is not widely agreed that religion has a rational cogency, it is widely recognized that rationalism has no cogent objection to religion; even though this is perhaps only because rationalism is at present itself suspect. We do not regard the issue between religion and reason as therefore disposed of; but it is no longer regarded as closing the way of return to religion. It is quite possible that there

must be a return to greater faith in reason before we can hope for a general and decided return to religion; but with that we must concern ourselves later on; all that we are called upon to show at the moment is that the supposed opposition of reason is no longer a serious hindrance to religion.

But, as we have already noted, a much greater hindrance to a return to religion is likely to be found in the belief in progress. The belief in progress has become such a complete substitute for religion, that progress is regarded not only as something in itself almost worshipful, but as able to be trusted to bring about that redemption of the human race which hitherto we have had to look to religion to accomplish. Progress, as popularly understood, is certainly a phenomenon of extraordinary and arresting interest; not only is it going on with persistency and acceleration before our eyes, but the unfolding of the prehistoric story of human development has revealed how man has apparently advanced from a purely animal condition to his present position, fighting against gigantic odds, and with no one to help him but himself. Although man's advance beyond the animal stage apparently took millenniums of struggle and suffering, and although civilization remained practically stagnant for further millenniums, there have now been given to man, not only the knowledge that progress has taken place, but instruments for

accelerating progress. Scientific knowledge is revolutionizing life day by day, and at ever increasing speed; so that while the story of the long upward struggle of the past might have seemed to make it necessary to postpone the hope of any considerable alteration in the condition of humanity, not to mention the consummation of human hopes, to a distance at least equal to man's immense past, the acceleration gained in the past century, and sustained and increasing in the present, brings such hopes much nearer. With our ever more penetrating knowledge of material, physical and psychic nature, with continuous discoveries and inventions that are revolutionizing our idea of what is possible, there is almost nothing that is forbidden to human hopes and may not shortly be within our grasp. The fact that man has progressed, apparently without any clear purpose in his mind, or without any certain guidance from without, shows that progress is an inherent law of his being: and now modern invention seems to show that all the powers of the universe can be used for his future advancement. There is practically no limit discoverable to the power at man's disposal, or the degree of health, wealth, comfort and interest to which it can bring us. The story of primitive man, as theoretically constructed by evolution, might conceivably depress us, seeing that it discloses how degraded and brutal was his origin. And for many, this must seem to pre-

clude altogether any idea that man could have been created by an intelligent and loving God, and in His image, or even that he owes anything to supernatural guidance or help. But any depressing conclusion consequent upon accepting this account as historical fact, however destructive to the faith and trust men once held, is prevented by the consideration that the old object of faith and ground of hope can be replaced by something much more certain and trustworthy, namely man's own capacity for co-operating with progress, and yet with no possibility of permanently hindering it. Not only has there been no fall in the past to mourn over, there is no possibility of a fall to fear in the future. When man realizes that progress is the law of the universe he will more completely yield to it, and thus help his advance to become more rapid and sure.

The future for humanity is therefore bright, and if it will have to be without faith in God, or the hope of any individual participation in that future, nevertheless progress itself will become a fact so absorbing to contemplate, and will open up a prospect so sufficient to work for, that it will fulfil all the purposes of religion, even worship, love and trust. Let man but fall in love with progress and trust it, and it can entirely take the place of God. The prospects of the recovery of religion are therefore bright, nay, they are certain, if only this is the religion that man will be willing to accept. It need

not even exclude other religious elements, so long as they are not insisted upon as necessary or certain; a belief in some sort of God there may be, a veiled, distant, and incomprehensible Being. If the facts are as spiritualists vehemently assert, some kind of future existence may be possible. Though, meantime, since this God evidently leaves man to help himself, and this present life is what matters, we ought to concentrate on this life and on human progress, and relegate any other kind of religious concern to the background. Those who clamour for a personal experience of God, or for a certainty that there is an existence beyond the grave, may be allowed to seek it; if they will only bear in mind the psycho-analyst's suspicions of what the desire for God may indicate of less respectable instincts being at work, and the possibility that the alleged communications of departed spirits may be traced to a combination of deception, telepathy and coincidence; and especially if they will not force those beliefs on other people who have no desire for such doubtful experiences or any consuming interest in another world. It has to be admitted that it would be sufficiently satisfying to a great number of people if only religion could be retained, as a vague feeling, as something to be fallen back upon if ever wanted; and if only it were not affronted by blatant denials of God or immortality, which only precipitate depression or reaction, then it would provide a distant

and hazy background which need not further intrude itself, and meanwhile man could give himself to this world and to the study of humanity, content and satisfied.

For this type of religion the prospects seem propitious; and it is the type of religion which seems to satisfy both the ordinary person and the enthusiastic humanitarian; but it is one which is all the more unsatisfying to any profoundly religious person, especially if he has in him anything of the evangelistic impulse, or desires any support from the fellowship of others. It is in this compromise that there is the greatest hindrance to any religious advance; and there seems no objective or observable reason why men should not settle down to this; indeed this seems to be precisely what is happening. But such a religion, while it is impervious to the need for an advance to something more personal, certain and effective, is nevertheless only too open, if no longer to the attacks of crude unbelief, yet to the further weakening of what faith it retains and influence that exerts, simply because of its increasing relegation to a remote and rarely contemplated background.

Yet there are a number of factors which tend to make it impossible for religion to be allowed to fade out of existence merely through general neglect and the abandonment of public worship and private devotion. The

challenge of the old-fashioned atheism may be less vocal, and can no longer demand that religion must be rejected on rational and intellectual grounds; but there is no doubt that atheism is becoming violently vocal on social and economic grounds. The combination of atheistic and revolutionary doctrines, may at first only disturb those of conventional social opinions or of comfortable social position, and such persons may be moved to pay more attention to religion simply in order to buttress up the form of society which secures to them their possessions and comforts. To any real revival of religion this motive would be a hindrance and only a further confusion of the issues. But the persons who would begin to take an interest in religion only for this purpose must be few, and could hardly remain long at this level. For it would soon be obvious even to them, that if religion was going to be used for any such purpose, it would have to gain a much stronger hold on individuals, and would then be more likely to play the part of a social ferment than of a social cement. The slightest acquaintance with the destructive forces which are being generated in modern society would soon convince the most conventional that, if religion is to prevent the threatened destruction from taking place, it will be insufficient, even if it were possible, for it to be used as a mere resistance to revolution, it would rather have to undertake the regeneration of society. If it is

going to prevent a revolution, it will have to be by a counter-revolution, even though that might have to be of a vastly different order from anything now being preached.

But even the more socially awakened, who can sense not only the rumblings which presage some catastrophe, but the discontent and misery which are the causes, should be the more effectually aroused to inquire into the part religion is playing in this movement. They ought to be able to sense in the new combination of atheism and socialism, which has now appropriated to itself the name of communism, something which in its temper is so vengeful, hideously hateful and essentially bloody-minded, that while understanding what there is in social conditions that has created and accounts for such feelings, they will begin to suspect that it is the atheism that accounts for them most. The confusion which has ensued from being confronted, as in pre-revolutionary Russia, with a long-sustained coalition between a socially blind religion and a brutal social order, explains sufficiently why a determination to reform that order has there been equally determined to get rid of the religion that was so much bound up with, definitely sanctioned, or at least acquiesced in that order. But the combination of anti-religion and revolution reveals to thoughtful analysis something more than a mere counter-coalition. With the abandonment of

religion there necessarily goes all belief in the possibility of converting people even to what is believed to be merely a social gospel, and inevitably there must be a recourse to the only alternative of coercion. This gospel must be preached at the point of the sword, with acceptance or death as the only alternatives. Moreover, since no divine sanction or pre-ordained possibility is looked to, or provides ground for the establishment of the new order, it must depend solely upon human effort. Under the strain of this effort, with the subconscious fear that after all it may not be a realizable possibility, and since there is no assurance that it is involved in the nature of things, men are bound to grow desperate, and the destruction of the present order, rather than the possibility of putting anything in its place, naturally becomes the immediate and at present all-sufficient concern. Revenge, rather than the redemption of mankind, becomes the dominant motive. The disbelief in God soon begets a disbelief in the rationality and goodness of human nature; of other people's nature, of course, at first, but inevitably, at last, of those elements hitherto regarded as good in one's own; and consequently the release of all those vile, even diabolical passions which surge up in human nature the moment a task of destruction is called for.

Those persons, and they must be a growing number, who are entirely alive to the fact that society must either

be reformed or pass through all the tumult, horror and chaos of a violent revolution, must begin to discern that if any real reformation is to be successful it must depend upon religious faith, will demand religious fervour, and must be sustained through religious fellowship. Religion is called for, not merely to stay a bloody revolution, but to provide, as the only alternative, a reformation based upon principles and powers, which, if they exist and are available, must be divine.

The awakening of these socially concerned persons to the necessity of religion may at first be satisfied to secure the social effectiveness of religion, and a purely social gospel may be preached; in stressed distinction, therefore, to the religion which has concerned itself so largely with doctrinal issues, ecclesiastical interests and personal devotion. But sooner or later it will be recognized that if it is to be socially efficient, religion must be certain about its fundamental principles, effective in inspiring fellowship and fervent in devotion. Agreed principles, a corporate consciousness, and individual consecration are necessary if any social order is to be discerned, believed in and developed. The very demand for a religion that shall be socially effective necessitates a religion rationally certain, expressible in united worship and internally recreative. All that religion has been in the past must therefore be actually increased and intensified, not abandoned or diminished. A religion

which shall save society must be theological, ecclesiastical and devotional; in other terms it must also be institutional, sacramental and mystical. These things have all become perverted, no doubt, but not because they were alien importations into religion; but rather because the religion which supported them was not sufficiently social. It is the concern for social efficiency that most emphatically requires a religion which shall be more personal, and, just because of that, dependent upon unshakable conviction and fruitful contact with other persons in united worship. Religion must have all its roots alive and all growing deeper, if it is to have its final effect in the renovation of all social relationships. Any idea that, at the present stage of its complication, we can give ourselves to the re-creation of the social order, and yet remain careless about the general aim and purpose of human life, the meaning and basis of truth and the existence of an infallible mind, eternal principle and invincible power in God; that we can dream of uniting the nations in recognizing a superior court of appeal, and yet regard the need of a supranational Church as a mistaken, irrelevant or impossible ideal; that we can find a new motive for human energy without changing man's interior valuations; such ideas are only to be mentioned for their superficiality to be recognized.

Therefore we may have some hope that the social

pressure, which must continue and increase until something is done to relieve it, will eventually persuade men to the need of deeper religion. The professed atheism and violent anti-religious hate which have been recently manifested in the Russian revolution, pointed as it is by the determination to carry through a world revolution by any means and at any cost, will perhaps eventually help to shake those people out of their complacency who have been contented to leave their religion in the background. For there is really nothing like the challenge of seriously considered atheism, to arouse the soul to the need for finding some other alternative; not only at an infinite remove from atheism, but secure against denial, questions or doubts. If the damage done to the very rationality of man, and the contradictions it inserts into the very conception of truth, which follow upon the surrender of belief in God, are only discerned by the more profoundly philosophical; if the blocked outlook for the future of humanity, and the meaninglessness of personal existence, consequent upon the denial of immortality, are only realizable by the thoughtful; yet when these mainly intellectual issues are emphasized by the existing confusion that overhangs our social problems, and the threatened horrors of social revolution, most men will be forced to think deeply, and think far forward. Atheism will be seen to involve such dreadful, dark and despairing conclu-

sions, than an excluding alternative will be sought with intense seriousness; and that can only be found in a religion rationally certain, personally experienced and socially confirming. Therefore we may look to the pressure of the present type of militant atheism at last to impress ordinary persons, and one day, of course, even the atheist himself, with the necessity for rediscovering religion; otherwise there is an end to all human hopes. It is the retention of a vague background of faith that prevents the advance to a sure and sufficient religion; and there is nothing so effective as atheism, seriously professed, passionately proclaimed, and socially embodied, to prove this vague faith inadequate, and create the demand for a real religion.

So deep, however, sometimes seems the indifference of the people to the necessity of a conscious, vital, personal religion that there is a temptation to believe that nothing short of some catastrophe will suffice to awaken and convince humanity. Argument is lost in confusion; the very victories that have been won remain unknown to the masses; sloth, social custom, competing interests, exert such a distracting influence, that it is felt only some violent upheaval can bring men face to face with the spiritual realities on which they really depend. It is useless to hope much from thought, because so few people will think until they are forced to.

There are three kinds of upheaval that might have

this effect on humanity: one would be a revival of religion. We are by no means shutting out from consideration that an outpouring of spiritual power is necessary, has again and again revived Christianity, and may always be sought; but there are certain conditions essential to a revival, which however unexpected its outbreak may seem, need to be present. We shall turn, at the conclusion of our discussion, to inquire what are the needs and hopes of a revival, but the imminence of a revival is always too incalculable a thing to be numbered among observable tendencies, which we are at present examining.

Some, however, put their faith in the return of Christ, to which constantly expected event they believe we must postpone any hope of seeing set up on earth a righteous social order and the establishment of international peace. Most Protestants, and, for different reasons, all Catholics regard this idea of an earthly reign of Christ in person, as a fantastic misinterpretation of Scripture; but there are also many Catholics, who, while believing that Christ will come at last to judge the world, expect that event will be solely for judgment, since they have no hope that mankind as a whole will ever accept the Christian faith. But there are many Protestants who regard both the idea that the Kingdom of God on earth must be postponed until Christ establishes it by His personal return, and the idea that the

world will never accept Christianity, as due to a lack of faith both in man and in God, as well as to a misunderstanding of spiritual principles. To discuss the interpretation to be placed upon Christ's prediction that He would return in glory would take us far from our present purpose; and anyhow, all who take the Scriptures for their guide must regard it as an event beyond calculation; for while we by no means exclude that event from our ultimate hopes, it lies entirely outside expectations that can be based upon observations of current tendencies and movements. While, however, it has sometimes been wondered whether it does not need some natural catastrophe to make men return to religion, we have material before us that makes it extremely doubtful whether anything of that nature would bring about the desired effect.

We have recently passed through the most stupendous catastrophe that has ever visited civilization, namely, the Great War. If anything could have awakened mankind to a religious need, it surely would have been that. What has been its effect on religion? At the outbreak of the War there was in all countries a turning to worship and prayer; some notoriously non-religious persons made public acknowledgment, or, in the more discreet form of fiction, confessed that they had discovered God. But, as the War advanced, the stress of

private sorrow, or the need for public effort, overwhelmed any marked awakening of religious concern. It may be that the religious awakening, which undoubtedly took place at the outbreak of the War, was directed into wrong channels, namely, by dedicating it to the prosecution of the War; but certain it is that the progressive effect of the War was to diminish religious concern, and the general effect was more probably to increase unbelief. Even if the War did bring a few permanently back to faith; that such a catastrophe should have been allowed to befall mankind certainly destroyed the faith of many others; and that religion seemed able to do nothing to end, so little to ameliorate, so much merely to stiffen determination to victory, and even to stoke the desire for vengeance, weakened many people's belief, at least in the general acceptance or organized expression of religion. A considerable number of peace idealists gave up trust in, and abandoned their allegiance to the Church; many were lost in movements that drifted away from definite faith, or, dwindling into futility, destroyed hope as well; while not a few adopted sexual principles, on what they thought to be only an extension of pacificism, which took them far away from Christianity.

The truth about the effect of the Great War is that no one has yet been able to envisage it, so vast was its magnitude, so unimaginable were its sufferings, so

complicated its causes; while its effects have yet to be worked through before they can be estimated. Attention has been so concentrated either upon its material effects, or upon its political causes, that few have been able to understand what this catastrophe has to reveal concerning the inevitable operation of certain elements in human nature, certain confusions in our faith, certain tendencies in social progress. Whether, as the years pass by, mutual recriminations as to war-guilt cease, and personal sorrow no longer forbids any questioning of the War's necessity or right, the significance of the War will be more clearly realized, is questionable; for its horrors will by that time have been largely forgotten. But it is clear that any further catastrophe, such as the outbreak of another and even greater war, or the worse horror and suffering of anything approaching a world-wide revolution, would have a very doubtful effect on religion; even the survival of humanity would be doubtful.

We therefore turn to inquire whether it is not possible that progress itself may accomplish that which others believe only some cataclysm can effect. We have already examined and rejected the notion that progress is a self-explained process, which disposes of the very need of God. What if progress turns out to be, first, a fact; secondly, a fact which demands belief in God; and, thirdly, a process which depends upon faith? Among

those who believe in progress there are some who count the eventual disappearance of religion as one of its tests and blessings; but these do not constitute a great number. Some who are certain that progress in scientific education must get rid, not only of this or that conception of theology, but of the central theological notion of God and the supernatural, are nevertheless anxious that we shall endeavour to retain a religious attitude and feeling towards life and personality.³ The apostrophizing of Reason, Humanity, Nature, the Life-force, Progress itself, are, as we have seen, pathetic, if unconscious, attempts to smuggle back some kind of worshipful and trustworthy substitute for Deity. They look to progress to give us a religion, purged of all superstition, and yet satisfying to the mind of man. If both progress and religion are realities this may be reasonably hoped.

It may, however, be simpler to decide what progress is before we go on to discuss whether there can be a religion without God. It does not need to be argued that mere change is not progress; there are such things in human affairs as error, delusion, reaction, and deterioration; these have first to be differentiated from progress. It has been questioned whether there is any metaphysical, historical or scientific basis for belief in

³ Recent example of this may be seen in Jane Harrison's "Themis," and Julian Huxley's "Religion without Revelation."

progress as an inevitable law.⁴ That some kind of progress has taken place, in the sense of development from simpler to more complicated organization, is indisputable. Why precisely there should be such progress it is difficult to explain; a fact it may be, but it is hardly a self-explained fact. It seems possible for the intellect to understand things always remaining the same; in fact, the intellect cannot really understand anything else. It is also a fact, with which observation makes us familiar, that things deteriorate; whether that is understandable or not, we have come to take it for granted that they do and will. But no one can explain why things should develop of themselves, and steadily upwards. To characterize any movement as progress, we presume the existence of a mind which stands sufficiently outside the movement to discern that it is a movement; and in order to decide that the movement is progress, there must be a clear idea of the place from which it started, and a clear vision of the goal to which it is moving. Only God could decide absolutely what was progress. And when we talk of progress we are not only assuming that a standard exists such as only God can constitute, but, in claiming that we can discern such a movement as a general law of the universe, overriding even human sloth and carelessness, we are

⁴ Two such different thinkers as Dean Inge and the late Professor Bury seem to be agreed that no such basis exists.

inferring that God is the cause of progress, for progress is movement towards a goal; and if progress is, as a matter of fact, a reality, it must be due to One who can see, not only the beginning and the goal, but the goal from the beginning. Progress is therefore a movement which can have no certain standard and no ultimate cause but God.

The very fact of progress is, however, often criticized by people concerned for religion; first, because a good deal of that which is called progress can be challenged, and is rather to be condemned as retrogression; secondly, because whatever external changes take place, human nature remains much the same, and has unchanging needs which nothing can alter; and, thirdly, because the abandonment of ideas associated with religion is often justified as progress. It is certainly possible, when thinking reverts to a pagan condition, as so much does to-day, to point out to those who defend such types of thought as indications of progress, that they are only returning to past modes of thought; which is not, at any rate, an empirical sign of progress. A similar criticism can often be made of modernist theology, on the ground that it only revives early heresies; while in the demand for freedom from certain sexual prohibitions, it can be pointed out that this is only reverting to practices well known to paganism, and, indeed, as old as Sodom and Gomorrha. If, there-

fore, progress means getting further away from the past, much that is claimed as progressive obviously has no right to the name; if, however, progress is reckoned by alteration and development, that progress has taken place in the realm of scientific knowledge and invention is beyond discussion. If cleanliness and health are positive and desirable standards, then there is no doubt that we are far in advance of primitive and mediæval times; and most observers would admit that a great change for the better has taken place in the attitude of civilized humanity towards anything that involves suffering; though here some are ready to cry out against the dangers of sentimentality and becoming too soft.

The instinctive religious disquiet about progress evidently needs further analysis, and especially does it need to be differentiated from an attitude to life which would simply discourage inquiry, invention or the raising of the standards of comfort and convenience; for if this were allowed to prevail, it would only take us back to primitive conditions. It needs, however, to be observed that industrial civilization, with its multiplication of mechanical devices, its vast productiveness, its tendency to segregation and ever swifter movement, does bring with it certain considerable disadvantages and is even running into grave dangers. To come to indisputable facts and agreed standards: industrial civilization is using up raw material, such as coal, iron and

oil, at an alarming rate; and while the end of these supplies may be far away, and science seems able to find substitutes for almost anything, yet there is a calculable limit to these raw materials or to their substitutes; whereas a simpler civilization, resting upon things that can be grown, runs into no danger of exhausting its materials, because they can be replaced, while, within certain limits, their production can be increased. The congregating of the peoples into vast cities has compelled improved sanitation, and the health of cities is for that reason often better than in country districts;⁵ but the relegation of agriculture to distant countries, even when compensated for by improved transport, is subject to two tendencies: first, the continual encroachment of industrialism upon agricultural areas, and, second, the doubtful healthiness of depending so much on food which, owing to the distance from which it must be brought, must be artificially preserved. Diseases like tuberculosis and cancer are essentially diseases caused by our civilization, and it is questionable whether there is any cure for them save in a radical return to simpler and more natural conditions. It is possible to argue that a return to simpler conditions is essential to a recovery of religious faith; and in that

⁵ Though there is no reason why the country should not be healthier than the town: its sanitation could be scientific and safer than town sanitation ever can be.

connection it should be noted that the great classics of religious literature were produced under such conditions, and, despite education and printing facilities, we do not seem able to produce anything like them under present conditions. This, however, raises a subject of considerable debate, and it is to be feared that, at the present moment, to demand a reversion to the primitive conditions under which great religious literature was produced, in order that we might share the experiences that gave rise to it, would seem to most moderns an enormous price to pay for something, after all, very ethereal in content. For if there is a suspicion growing among some thoughtful people that, while we have gained the whole world, we are in danger of losing our own soul, no widespread conviction has yet been reached which is willing to lose the whole world in order to gain its soul. But there are disquieting indications that the more complicated and exhausting life which modern man is being compelled to live is draining his nervous strength and is considerably upsetting his mental balance; so that if mankind is to continue along the present lines of development, it must find some compensating interior strength and peace. Modern man may really need more religion than primitive man, not less; more sense of an ultimate purpose, of eternal realities and of interior contact with them.

Without therefore relying upon any wholesale con-

demnation of modern progress, and accepting the conditions and tendencies of modern civilization as making for real progress, we can maintain that progress is calling out for further progress in religion; that is, for a wider recognition, and a deeper appropriation of religion. It is more than likely that the comparative lack of interest in religion, which is so noticeable, is superficial and temporary. Its superficiality is indicated by the revival of interest that can be generated by newspaper articles on the subject, the constant rise of new religious cults, and by the crowds that will still gather if anything novel in the way of religious expression can be promised. That the present lack of interest may be temporary is indicated by the fact that men's interests have been enormously engaged by a continuous succession of discoveries and inventions, the multiplication of opportunities for recreation, and the accelerated mode of general life. This increase of external interests may for the time have turned man's attention from his interior needs, which continue the same, but have come to be overlooked in the excitements, demands and distractions of modern life. Indeed, modern man is rather like a baby, who, crying with hunger, can be persuaded to forget all about it for a few minutes, by being shown some glittering toy, or given a rattle to play with; the pangs of hunger will return only more clamantly, and will have to be satisfied.

We can therefore look to progress itself to compel mankind to penetrate considerably deeper than the present somewhat superficial level of concern. It must soon become obvious that not only is physical, biological and psychological science unable to answer the more important questions the mind can ask, but the way in which it has answered some of its own questions would deprive science of its ground and standards. Thought has recently been engaged mainly in criticism; when it comes to construct it must soon be made aware that it is deplorably vague, confused, and lacking in any basis from which to start. Thought has been moving for a long time in a strictly limited area, prescinding alike from the ultimate questions of the basis and the purpose of thought. These questions must be faced, because, at present, many of our most widely accepted conclusions really deny that human thought has any validity or value. Real thoughtfulness is not, at the present moment, obviously on the increase, and even our professional thinkers seem curiously dense, alike to the existence of fundamental questions, and to the implications of their own thought. This must surely pass, and the very exercise of thought must at length bring men into touch with more important questions. If there is such a thing as progress thought must surely go deeper.

Moreover, there are many things in modern progress

which have only to go further to compel real thinking, not only among the thoughtful, but among the thoughtless. The tendencies of progress are not really eliminating the danger of war and social strife; they are obviously increasing them. While the mind of modern man is more and more being turned away from itself, it is manifesting disquieting symptoms. The increased sensitiveness which is being educated in us all makes personal relationship increasingly difficult; interior conflicts are developing in the subconscious realm; the combination of these with external pressure is producing an alarming number of mental collapses; despite amusements and mental relaxation the whole world is working under a strain which shows signs of becoming greater than man can bear. The interest in morbid psychology, and the recourse to psycho-analysis, show that the mind of modern man is in an unhealthy and unstable condition. While we are hearing a great deal about the damage wrought by repressed instincts, we shall have to hear more soon about the damage which is done to those in whom they are released; and meanwhile it is open to suspicion whether it is not religion that is suffering most from repression at the present moment. It would be astonishing if a large number of people were ceasing to be physically hungry; it would be highly suspicious if it were found that sexual desire was everywhere dying down; we know

what our psychologists would suspect. Is it not possible, seeing that religion has occupied such an important place in man's life, that the present lack of interest indicates an unnatural attitude which must either produce abnormal mentality or bring about a great upheaval?

It cannot be that man will much longer be content with living a life which, on many modern conclusions, simply possesses no meaning, has no standards, and offers no ascertainable or worthy goal. If an endeavour is made to be satisfied with such a life, we shall witness gradually invading the minds of the thoughtful a debilitating and intolerable pessimism, we shall see a slowing down of the constructive forces of life, tendencies developing which, while stimulating the sexual instinct, will only make for sterilization, perversion and racial suicide, and a general growth of ennui, weariness and boredom, until conscious personality becomes a burden man can no longer sustain.⁶ Indeed the signs of these things are already not far to seek. Progress, even upon our present debatable lines, must bring man back to his need of religion; and this will soon have to be sought with a desperation born of hunger and the fear of starvation. We have only to carry a stage farther the

⁶ The passing of Mr. Thomas Hardy, in calling forth worthy praise of his undoubted genius, has hardly drawn sufficient attention to the pessimism of his outlook, which is, however, the only attitude possible on the basis of his belief.

trifling with destructive negations in thought, to find ourselves facing absolute darkness; with destructive theories in social reform, to find ourselves facing chaos; and the nearer man comes to this, the more dramatically and quickly must he return to the only foundations of sanity: an eternal hope beyond this life and a spiritual anchorage beyond this world. Recovery is certain; if we only go a little farther, we must come back; and what is called progress must carry us there. It may need a generation of atheism, revolution and chaos to teach mankind where alone its hopes can be found; a little forward thinking may, however, save us from such an awful experience. It is this forward thinking that we must press upon our generation; it will bring us back to religion by a safer and less suffering way.

V

THE RECONSIDERATION OF CHRISTIANITY

WE have seen that there are a number of favourable tendencies at work in modern thought and life which open out some prospects of a recovery of real religion. Movements that are seeking truth must find themselves eventually confronted with the claim of Christianity to be the Truth, and those of us who believe Christianity to be justified in its claims have high hopes of that day; for we are confident, if it is truth that is being sought, not only that Christianity will be able to abide all the tests and demands of truth, but, as a matter of fact, that Christianity supplies the only adequate basis from which we may set out to seek the truth, as well as reveal the consummation that shall confirm and complete man's desire for truth. Moreover, Christianity brings us the assurance that there is planted in man as such the desire for truth, and that this universe was specially constructed in order to inspire man to seek the truth. It is, of course, lamentably true that often, for reasons of comfort, expediency or gain, man is easily tempted to repress the demand for truth in his

own mind, to shut his eyes to the facts that are staring him in the face, and to evade the rigorous discipline and the stern demand that truth makes of all who would seek and follow it to the end. But there is something in the very mechanism of the human mind which will eventually bring up to the surface anything that has been repressed. Whenever truth is resisted and a lie harboured, even if this is carried out partly in unconsciousness, the human mind suffers some disturbance, more or less severe. This interior discontent at any evasion of truth is due to the instinctive avidity of the human mind for truth, and, given time, is bound to make itself felt; and indeed will take stern vengeance on individuals or generations which try to repress this instinct or neglect this desire. There is something else in man, as we may gather from our own interior conflicts and our observations of our fellows, that can be tempted to put up with something less than the truth, which prefers to remain in the hazy light of half-truths, and may sometimes prefer the shelter of a lie. But modern psychology warns us that nothing which is recognized by any mind to be truth can be repressed without its working havoc with that mind, either by persisting subterraneously as a constant source of strain, and manifesting itself in irrational fears and weakening irritation, or, venting itself at length in some mental upheaval or nervous breakdown. Despite the fact that

the objective universe burdens all thoughtful minds, especially in our days, with the problems of pain and evil; and that the life experience of nearly every one brings disappointment or dissatisfaction, hardship or hindrance; it is these very imperfections of the universe that compel man to look above the universe, and beyond his own life, for some solution of existence more in accordance with his nature, his potentialities and desires. There is something, therefore, in life, whether as objectively presented or as interiorly experienced, which is ever spurring man on to seek truth, and will not let him rest until he has found it. The universe as a whole seems peculiarly designed to compel man to seek for ultimate truth.

The concern for truth is, among thoughtful people, generally acknowledged to be man's supreme duty, and the quarrel between religious and thoughtful non-religious people sometimes resolves itself into the issue that the non-religious claim that they are still seeking truth, while the religious claim that they have found it. Quite apart from the question why the truth found by the religious fails to satisfy the non-religious, who are still seeking it; and, for the moment, leaving on one side the question as to what then are the tests of truth; there is a confusion in this issue that needs first to be cleared up. It seemed sometimes to be the assumption of nineteenth-century rationalism that the truth was

bound to be so uncomfortable, and so contradictory to all man's desires, that it was almost to be tested by these characteristics. It is difficult to see any *a priori* reasons why this should be so, for among man's desires there is, whatever its strength or weakness when compared with other instincts, a desire for the truth. Those who adopted this attitude did not seem to have noticed how, in assuming that the truth must contradict man's desires, they were admitting either that man desires something better than reality can ever grant, when the origins of such desires seem to be unaccounted for; or, if the truth is better than anything man can desire, that, nevertheless, when it is discovered man will not rejoice in it. It is surely discernible by every thoughtful person that such assumptions involve an utterly unintelligible philosophy, whether it call itself naturalistic or idealistic. There is something here worse than confusion, it is more in the nature of a contradiction.

But there are further confusions which need to be eliminated from the issue. It is assumed by some that the search for truth involves a process of such an infinite character that the truth is never really, but is always only to be found; and it has been declared that the mind is really exhilarated and satisfied not by the finding, but by the seeking: it is the search, not the discovery, it is the quest, not the goal that inspires the mind. Secondly, it is often assumed that religion, in so far as it claims

to be a revelation of truth, is prohibited from applying to revelation the ordinary tests of truth, or from seeking any farther, and thus encourages a blind acceptance and produces a stagnant condition of mind. There is a misunderstanding here for which the professions and the mental attitude of some religious people are no doubt largely responsible. But there is nothing in such an attitude that is either necessary or even strictly orthodox. It is held at least by one venerable school of philosophy, namely, that of Scholasticism, that there are certain truths which can be established by the ordinary reason of man; there are other truths which, by reason alone, man could never discover, but when they are revealed, they are seen to be, at least, not irrational, but also to confirm, fit in with and complete what has been already established by the natural reason. Moreover, the great truths revealed by religion need to be held by no one in such a way as to prohibit or make unnecessary further inquiry; they are starting-places for further exploration rather than stopping-places beyond which thought must not go. The very fact that many of these truths must come to us in the form of statements indicates that as such they also need to be confirmed in experience and expressed in character. As statements they are only indications of where we are to start from in order to have the truth verified in experience; and, at least as far as this life is concerned, that experience can

be of an indefinitely deepening and widening nature. The issue seems really to lie between the idea that, if a thing is to be regarded as truth at all, it must be the whole truth, and therefore the mere statement of it is equal to ultimate and infinite reality; or that the statement has no right to be called the truth. As a matter of fact, Scholasticism holds that infinite and ultimate reality, as it is in itself, is beyond man's knowledge in this world and, in some degree, even in the world to come; for man can never know God in the same way and degree as God knows Himself. But what can still be maintained is that man may have a knowledge that is adequate for the purpose, which is true so far as it goes, that is, which points to the truth sufficiently for its increasing verification to be made possible. It needs to be also understood that dogmas laid down by the Christian Church do not involve that it is sufficient to believe the dogma, or to confess it in a creed; it must be confirmed by supernatural faith, which is an inner experience bringing absolute conviction; and it must be expressed otherwise than merely by the recital of a creed. It is not even claimed that the form in which the dogmas have been expressed is the final or perfect form, than which no better can ever be conceived; but only that in a certain issue which has been raised this form rather than its contrary is true. This system does indeed maintain that dogmas must not be contradicted;

but however sometimes its defenders may have given that impression, this attitude has nothing whatever to do with the fear that free inquiry might undermine the decisions arrived at. A dogma involves something that is axiomatic; that is, if it were contradicted it would speedily be discovered not only that the gradually constructed system of truth was in ruins, but that the very conception of truth would have been undermined. Truth discovered is only the starting-place for the discovery of more truth; it is only when the truth on some subject remains problematical that we are really brought to a halt, and until that problem is solved, along that line we can proceed no farther. This may perhaps do something to clear hindering confusions out of the way, and to make it possible for all those who seek truth to travel a little farther together in company.

Before, however, we come to discuss the truth of Christianity in general or, as a whole, there are many intermediate stages to be explored and agreed upon. And, first of all, we have to examine one of the most hopeful tendencies of our times, however curious at first sight it may seem, namely, that there is a great tendency to demand a religion of some kind, even when no satisfactory object for worship or trust can be found. Nineteenth-century unbelieving philosophy had in Herbert Spencer already registered some such conclusion, for while his philosophy posited at the heart of all

things an Unknowable, he at any rate believed that this very fact called for an attitude of reverence, somewhat equivalent to that which religion had always inspired, namely, a sense of awe in the presence of the inscrutable. But it is quite obvious that no such sense of awe could ever be inspired by a mere blank at the end of man's knowledge, or by any conception that the questions raised in man's mind had no sort of answer, and the desires of his heart no corresponding reality. Something was posited to exist, though beyond man's further acquaintance, which was positive and absolutely real, even though man could know nothing more, save that it was there. It was believed, however, that this Unknowable called out a sense of awe in man, because it marked the limitations of his own mind, and yet that it was of so positive a character in itself that it demanded also a certain amount of trust. The answer to all problems existed, even if man was for ever incompetent to learn what that answer was. Spencer's attitude, at least, as outlined in his "First Principles," and, provided his Unknowable might be revealed by other methods than those open to science, was not irreconcilable with a religion based upon Scholastic philosophy and mystical experience; and there were not a few in the nineteenth century who found for themselves, through Spencer's "First Principles," a way back to Christianity. There is a modern attitude which seems even less hopeful than

nineteenth-century agnosticism, for if it still reserves an area for the Unknowable, it does not fill this up with anything positive, and therefore offers no assurance whatever that it contains any answer to man's questions or desires. Science is compelled to acknowledge that it is confronted by many mysteries, and whether it is ever in actual touch with reality is really beyond its own decision;¹ but it seems to be held that, nevertheless, nothing can take us any farther; questions about the ultimate may be asked, but they will never be answered. Other schools may be more dogmatically certain that rationalistic thought, or naturalistic science, will eventually give us reality; and if this reality gives no answer to man's questions and provides no realization of his desires, he must simply face its refusal with reverent acquiescence. What there is to be reverent about, it is a little difficult to discover. This is apparently only an endeavour to retain a religious name for what can really be nothing more than silent sympathy for human life and personality, when faced by the fact that, while its desires and ideals have grown beyond its environment, that environment not only cannot answer them, but will finally annihilate the personality that has given rise to them. It is really impossible to equate this attitude with anything deserving the name of religion; no

¹ See Karl Pearson's "Grammar of Science" for this general conclusion.

one can be called upon to revere existence as such, for it obviously has neither purpose nor meaning. We can, of course, go down into the abyss of nothingness with our flag flying, but all that is left for us to do, one supposes, is to salute the flag, that is human ideals, or the humanity thus bravely going down to the nescient and the non-existent. This may perhaps claim to be stoical fortitude, but its attempt to retain reverence, and call this reverent attitude religion, is pathetic in the extreme; it is, indeed, religion without an object; a religion worshipping the lowest of all idols, nothing at all. At any rate, those who endeavour to retain only this remnant of religion will find that they have against them the great majority of humanity; and not only those who believe that they have a real religion, but those who will declare they want no religion, least of all one that has no revelation, no theology and no object.

The desire to retain the word religion, even for something quite unworthy of the name, is however a sign and a confession that man is unalterably and incurably religious; and he is still being compelled to find an object worthy of religious worship, trust, love and service. For religion can never be content merely with reverence; that is only one element in the religious attitude, though an important, and indeed, an essential one. We therefore need not treat too seriously the fur-

ther suggestion that religion could be sustained without any object, if it were still allowed to express itself in some form of external ceremony.² The modern man, at his present stage of education, does not seem to take too easily to religious ceremonies of any kind; it would be still more difficult to persuade him to take part in ceremonies only to express a meaningless attitude towards nothing. This proposal is, however, an interesting confession that man does need religious rites of some kind; but they will certainly not be revived by being first emptied of all meaning. These endeavours to retain religion at all costs remain a valuable indication of the ache there is in the heart of man, which will surely never be relieved by these sophisticated pretences. These very proposals only indicate that a previous question needs to be faced. Whether or not religious people have actually attained truth, they certainly believe they are in touch with reality, and any suggestion that their religion was merely subjective, a useful sublimation, or even a social cement, and had no other reality behind it, would, if accepted, bring their religion to an end at once. Whether it is mistaken or not as to its attainment, at least this much must be conceded to religion; it is absolute reality that it seeks, and it will not be satisfied with anything less. It should

² This seems to be suggested both in Miss Harrison's "Themis," and in "The Invisible God," by H. G. Wells.

therefore be possible, if we take our stand on the existence of this ineradicable religious instinct, to find for it a basis in reality, and an answer in certainty; but we shall not, at this point, make headway with the largest number, if we call in the aid of any alleged revelation, or attempt to demonstrate by rational processes the existence of the only conceivable answer to human desire, namely, an infinite personal God. It may prove to be a more open approach, and will start from a more commonly accepted basis, if we can show that the search for truth, which most will acknowledge to be a supreme human duty, involves faith in a divine reality and trust in a divine revelation. The method of approach which endeavours to show that reason can demonstrate the existence of God, however valid it may be for those who believe it is thus demonstrated, is not valid for those whose mental operations, whatever they are worth, lead them to a different conclusion. Whether we retain or reject Scholasticism, it ought to be recognized that this method of approach to religion is not really the first question to be settled. The prior problem to be solved is not the question of God, but man's capacity for attaining truth; for, unless he has such a capacity, to attempt to answer these ultimate questions, one way or the other, is not starting at the beginning. We are therefore not going to endeavour to convince anyone that the existence of God can be demonstrated by

reason; we are going to put the old-time arguments in a somewhat different form, namely, whether the existence of reason does not presuppose the existence of God. Or, to put it in a simpler and positive form: man's search for truth presupposes the existence of God.

It is worth while spending some time in getting this position clear; for it may clear up a good deal else. If in any way man is seeking truth, he must be assuming that truth is, in some degree, attainable. To deny that the truth is attainable would, of course, create an impossible position, since it would involve a breach of the law of contradiction; for while it would be maintaining that the truth was not attainable, it would, in the very same breath, be maintaining that this statement was true. The enunciation of the law of contradiction has been one of the most fundamental achievements of the mind of man. Unfortunately, in modern thought, it is often, in essence, completely disregarded. It is, however, the first stepping-stone towards the discovery of truth, and if it is ignored, nothing but error, and what is worse, confusion, can follow.³ Now, if we cannot say that truth is not attainable by man, are we then at liberty to affirm that its opposite is true, namely, that the truth *is* attainable by man? In strict logic, of two contradictions, where the one is disproved, the other is taken

³ It is well at this point to recall Bacon's aphorism: "Truth arises more readily from error than from confusion."

to be proved. But at this point we are dealing with the very instrument that makes logic, namely, the mind of man, and we cannot prove that its working is valid merely by giving an instance of how it works. In the New Scholasticism ⁴ an attempt has been made to meet modern thought by allowing that, although we cannot make the dogmatic assertion that truth is unattainable, without landing ourselves in contradiction, yet it would be wise not to accept as dogmatically proved, its opposite, that truth *is* attainable; we must, however, treat this as an assumption and see how the assumption works out.

It may be suggested that a further point of advance lies open. We cannot safely continue our thinking on the basis of an assumption which we shall never be able to have confirmed until humanity has reached the final stage of its inquiry into truth, whatever that may be. It is proposed, therefore, that another question should now be raised, namely: what is there that would give a reasonable ground for this assumption? Remembering that this is an assumption which man is bound to make, and which he does make every time he thinks, it is submitted that the only rational ground for such an assumption is that there is an infinite and infallible Mind which has bestowed upon the human

⁴ See "Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy," by Cardinal Mercier; Chapter on Criteriology, Vol. I, pp. 362 ff.

mind the power to feel after and find truth. If there is no such mind, or if the human mind comes from anything less than mind, it has no possibility of ever finding any reality corresponding to itself, and this would make truth therefore impossible; which, as we have already seen, we cannot affirm without involving ourselves in a contradiction. The old definition of truth, namely, the correspondence between mind and reality, still serves; and it is for the human mind to correspond with reality; but unless reality at least contains mind it is impossible for the human mind to correspond to it. It is useless for the mind to set out to explore reality unless the power to do so has been bestowed upon it; and such a power can only be bestowed by a Mind that has made the human mind after its own likeness. Therefore, it is submitted, the search for truth, wherever undertaken, implicitly and inevitably, and however unconsciously, assumes the existence of an infallible Mind bestowing upon human minds the power to discover truth. If the matter is only given sufficient thought, it will therefore have to be admitted that whenever men think with the idea of arriving at truth, they are actually assuming the existence of God. And if anyone should declare this assumption is irrational, he is contending that the human mind is necessarily irrational, that is, is incapable of truth: which, once again, is affirming what it is denying. We are compelled

to think thus: if the assumption is of blind necessity, we are imbeciles; the only thing that can make it not a blind necessity is the gift of God. God is therefore seen to be the fundamental datum of all thought. Man's relation to God is therefore already religious in this sense, that his mind is bound to God by God's gift to him of something of His own mind. When the gift is acknowledged by man, then religion has begun. If these arguments are true, then it may be concluded that Theism is involved in all human thought; for we need not turn aside to examine either Pantheism or Deism, since they would not satisfy the assumptions that thought is bound to make, while, of course, they rule out the possibility of religion; for religion is a relationship between God and man, who must be sufficiently distinct and sufficiently near for that relationship to be possible; which Pantheism on the one side, and Deism on the other respectively deny.

We have therefore only to turn to examine what religious systems there are that demand our consideration; and, strictly speaking, there are very few. Some of them are immediately excluded because they deny the conditions of real religion. Hinduism falls over into Pantheism. Buddhism, at least in its strict and original sense, is completely agnostic as to God and the soul, and proposes only a psychological process in order to escape from the burden of personal consciousness. Buddhism,

taken in this sense, is really the only serious alternative to religion; but not only would such an attitude be generally unacceptable to the strongly personalized mentality of the West, but, in its original form, it has never been able to sustain itself in the East. It has become a religion, which originally it was not, by developing into a sort of trinity of Buddhas. Its ceremonial worship, its mechanized prayer and, in its Tibetan form, its employment of sacraments and a hierarchy, if not due to later contact with Christianity, nevertheless present in an inchoate form that which we can at once abandon for its more conscious and concrete representation in historic Christianity.

At this time of day it is a waste of time to consider Zoroastrianism or Mohammedanism. Zoroastrianism has hardly any representation to-day, and no more than Mohammedanism is likely to make any appeal to the educated mind. Moreover, what is true in Zoroastrianism has already passed into Judaism. Mohammedanism can be classified as a kind of halfway-house between Judaism and Christianity, deriving from the former and reacting from the latter, in considerable ignorance of both. Judaism is a religion which contains within itself the promise of a further development; if that development is not Christianity, then Judaism has had no development, and is discredited; for its magnificent succession of prophets came to an end with the death of

John the Baptist, and it certainly needs to be explained why Judaism has produced no prophets since Christ claimed to fulfil their expectations. Moreover, however lamentable in many ways it may be, both Judaism and Mohammedanism are showing signs of lapsing into that atheism and agnosticism which is pressing upon all religions, but which find in those that have a deistic tendency an all too easy victim. While Christianity is exposed to the same attacks, the very fact that it has maintained itself so long in the sceptically inclined West, at least gives the objective hope that it will stand its ground longer; indeed, we believe that it is the only religion that will be able to outlast the attacks of scepticism, for, as we have shown, scepticism has to borrow the fundamental faith of Christianity, namely, its belief in truth, before it can even indulge in scepticism.

We need not stay very long to examine the attempts that have been made either to manufacture an amalgam of all the religions, such as we find in Theosophy, or to extract from them their ideas without their personifications, which we find in such a system as New Thought. The attempt of Theosophy to find a hidden meaning in all the religions, enabling each to retain its own forms while appropriating the essence which is identical in all, is not based on any clear conception of what the essence of religion is, involves the embracing of irreconcilable contradictions, and finds insuperable difficulty in

reducing Christianity sufficiently to include it in any such scheme. Moreover, religions are not made in this way; they have always been made by men who believed they were inspired by God to announce the truth to mankind. Theosophy is a superficial eclecticism, it cannot grow and will not survive, and its only useful purpose is that it may introduce some people to Christianity, which, as a matter of fact is what it often does; the others will eventually slip back into unbelief or indifference. Its rise would never have been possible if the broader estimate of the non-Christian religions, which Christianity itself demands, had been more widely known; for that sees in Christianity the fulfilment and the completion of all that was true in any religion. The time is therefore more than ripe for a reconsideration of Christianity by those in our generation who are still not persuaded to become Christians.

We cannot undertake, as any part of our present task, a full exposition of the Christian faith.⁵ We must content ourselves with maintaining that the complete Christian faith is alone adequate to human needs, and with emphasizing, in particular, the need of the fullest Christian faith concerning Christ, on which all else depends, and from which all else derives. Therefore it is

⁵ The writer would venture to refer inquirers to his "Foundations of Faith" (4 vols.), Allen & Unwin, for a somewhat full exposition, which endeavours to state the historic faith as still the best answer to modern questions.

a concern integral to the purpose of our present inquiry to show that it is not worth while considering any kind of reduced Christianity, such as that which gets rid of the idea of the Incarnation. But since there have been so many attempts to offer to those who cannot believe in an Incarnation, a purely humanitarian and merely prophetic Christ, we must make some examination of this halfway proposal before we attempt any positive exposition of the fully developed faith concerning Christ; for it is around the fact and meaning of Christ's personality that the present crisis in religion has developed, and it is there that it will have to be settled.

We had occasion to notice the destructive effect of certain critical theories, when we were trying to ascertain the causes which had operated to produce the confusion, uncertainty and lack of conviction which distinguish the modern religious attitude.⁶ We must, however briefly, traverse the same ground, but this time in order to show that there is nothing in these theories which prohibits a return to a full and assured faith in Christ as One who is what He has been confessed to be by the Christian Church, and more than deserving of the place given to Him in historic Christianity.

Throughout the nineteenth century, and continuing into our own, there have been various attempts to present what was believed to be a historical portrait of

⁶ See Chapter II, pp. 55-62.

Jesus Christ, shorn of many of the legends which it was believed the Gospels enshrined, but especially distinguished from the theological theories of His Personality developed under controversy, which it was felt had only obscured His historical reality. It was believed that the figure of Christ, as He appeared to His contemporaries, was recoverable by examination of the Gospels. Passing by the question whether Christ's contemporaries saw all He was, it was nevertheless held that, by the application of critical principles, there was disclosed a historical figure making no pretensions to divine personality, and not claiming to perform miraculous works. The figure thus recovered, while of engaging attraction and quite unusual personal power, never claimed to be anything more than a teacher of simple faith in God, with whom any human soul might come into the closest communion by accepting God's forgiveness, and seeking to imitate Him. It was admitted that Jesus claimed to possess such close communion with God that it enabled Him to call God His Father; but this was a relationship that all others might share, if they cared to believe in God, fulfil His commandments and yield themselves to the divine impulses that would then be communicated to them. The ideas that Jesus Christ had any unique and unapproachable relationship to God, or that His death had any sacrificial or propitiatory significance, which was necessary to reconcile God and man, were due to later

theories being incorporated into the Christian religion, mainly by the Apostle Paul, but traceable ultimately to the heathen cults and pagan mysteries of the first century, which were full of the idea of a suffering God, born, dying and risen again, by whom, through various sacramental means, eternal life could be communicated to His worshippers.

The critical principles on which it was believed that this historical figure of Jesus Christ could be recovered from the Gospels, have however never been clearly stated or agreed to; they have been arbitrarily applied, and yielded quite different results in different hands. Moreover, the explanation that infiltration from the pagan mysteries accounted for the corruptions of the simple teaching of Christ professed a knowledge of the pagan mysteries which did not exist, and the presence in them of ideas which further research does not confirm; and meantime others were finding in the Old Testament a sufficient origin of the miraculous stories, the theological theories and the sacramental worship which Christianity so soon assumed. It soon became evident, from the conflicting representations of Christ which different critics professed to have recovered, that it was not purely literary critical principles that were being applied, but that certain preconceived theories of who Jesus was, of what He ought to have said, and of what He might have done, were being applied to the

Gospels, and everything that conflicted with these theories was being ruled out on what were more or less subjective standards. Moreover, the application of these critical methods left such complete uncertainty about what in the Gospels could be accepted as historical, that it was not long before the theory made its appearance that the personality of Jesus Christ had no historical existence whatever, but was an elaborate myth. Although this theory was put forward by persons who had previously done no outstanding work on Gospel criticism and has never been accepted by any who have; and although the materials for this myth were again traced to different sources in the mysteries, the Old Testament, some supposed Passion Play, or even to the personification of social theories; because of the way in which it was seized upon by unbelievers, was adopted by a few specialists in other realms, especially by some of the psychologists, as fitting in with their general theories of a myth-creating tendency in the human mind, it caused considerable disturbance among conventional believers whose education and training gave them no power to refute such ideas. A few distinguished critics,⁷ and at least one distinguished rationalist⁸ took the matter up, and soon reduced the mythical theory to ridicule; and

⁷ See pamphlets, "Ist das 'liberale Jesusbild' widerlegt?" by Weinel, and "Jesus von Nazareth Mythos oder Geschichte?" by Weiss.

⁸ "The Historical Jesus," by F. C. Conybeare.

time has sufficed to convince those who are competent to judge that the theory is the *reductio ad absurdum* of radical criticism rather than any disproof of the historicity of Jesus.

Contemporary with, or, following on, the putting forward of the mythical theory, radical critics began to question the picture of Jesus as a mere teacher of a liberalized religious faith, which they identified as a mere replica of certain modern notions, and to replace that picture by that of a prophet who believed himself sent into the world to announce, and by His death to inaugurate a catastrophic, supernatural coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.⁹ But to establish the historicity of this picture, just as previously Christ's apocalyptic predictions had been excised as due to misunderstanding, or later interpolations, so now, anything that seemed to conflict with the expectation of an immediate and purely supernatural setting up of the Kingdom was in turn similarly explained away. The conclusion, however, almost immediately drawn in certain circles from the portrait of the apocalyptic Christ thus presented, was that Jesus was obsessed with His own supernatural significance, and had an entirely fanatical outlook upon human history. And modern psychology has been swift to take the further step and now regards Jesus as a neurotic and unbalanced personality, of no

⁹ See "The Quest of the Historical Jesus," by Schweitzer.

further interest save as a pathological example. It is difficult to see how the unexpert mind is to make anything of the alternatives that modern criticism has left for it to choose between: a purely humanitarian teacher, an unhistorical myth, a fanatical prophet, a seriously deranged personality; unless it can conclude that these representations not only contradict one another, but cancel each other out, so that, therefore, no one of them is true; when the only conceivable alternative left is that the Gospel picture as a whole can be taken as trustworthy.

Therefore it must once again be considered whether what Christ claimed for Himself is not simply the truth.¹⁰ And the question has to be faced whether, although Jesus did not use concerning Himself the phrases embodied in the Creeds, and the New Testament does not employ the technical terminology thrashed out in later discussions, even "in the light of modern psychology," the Personality of Christ does not demand a substantially identical explanation. But it will not be easy for a generation that has hastily dismissed the idea of the Incarnation as an impossibility, and has

¹⁰ A general discussion of the result of critical principles with the conclusion that they only establish the truth of the Gospels can be found marshalled in Felder's "Christ and the Critics." Although conclusions of different weight are somewhat too uncritically contrasted, the book calls for serious consideration and makes out a powerful case.

too hurriedly concluded that Jesus never Himself claimed to be anything of the kind, to return and accept both these as historical facts. But there is a line of approach along which those who are really mentally alert and unprejudiced can begin to reconsider both the facts and the doctrines the Church has constructed to explain them. That approach has been made possible by the material accumulated for the purpose of constructing a critically historical, a purely humanitarian, and a psychologically conceivable personality, as the real subject of the Gospel records. Gospel criticism has at least sufficed to bring out the many-sidedness of Jesus Christ, His human sympathy, His wide interests, and a disposition which embraces the varying temperaments into which ordinary humanity has to be classified; and, therefore, to emphasize the uniqueness of His character, just because it is so wide, complete and balanced. The Gospels present us not so much with a biography as with the materials for a biography; and yet that biography will never be written, for no one person is of sufficiently wide sympathy and understanding to take in the catholicity of Christ's interest, mind and character. We here seem to be in touch with someone who is more than an individual, and who is yet uniquely individual, in the sense that His personality is indivisible. There is no reflection in His consciousness of unresolved conflict, that He has ever passed through some

great change, or that He is aware of that horrible division in our nature which conscience makes when it accuses us of sin. There is visible all the strain which the weakness of our flesh imposes on us in weariness and disinclination to face pain; but any approach of temptation or conflict is relieved by appealing to the will of God and the simple acceptance of it as His own. Christ's humanity, which some prefer as indisputable, simple and needing no explanation is, however, so unique, profound and inclusive, as to necessitate positing a divine personality as its immediate cause.

Christ's humanity is not only evident in His own intense and easily roused feelings, but in the wide range of His sympathy for suffering, sinful and wayward mankind; which are, however, wonderfully balanced both by the patience with which He submits to suffering, and by the call to supreme sacrifice which He believes men are capable of answering. His consciousness of His own humanity is confessed in the title Son of man, by which He chose to denote Himself; but the way in which this has to be emphasized is a sign that there is something more of which He is also conscious. The fact that Christ was uneasy under all the honorific titles that were bestowed upon Him: Son of God, Son of David, the Messiah, Lord, or even good Master; and that He Himself preferred the title which no one else gave Him, namely, Son of man, has only lately come to

be capable of being fully understood. It was not that the honorific titles were regarded by Him as too high, but that they involved confused notions, conventional ideas and incomplete understanding of who He was. His use of the title Son of man has given rise to an enormous amount of ingenious, but unconvincing speculation, none of which has yet secured an agreed conclusion. It has, in turn, been interpreted as assumed by Christ in order to deny that He was anything more than a man, to affirm that He was the typical man, and to identify Himself with the apocalyptic figure that is given a similar, if not quite the same, title in the Canonical Book of Daniel and the uncanonical Book of Enoch.

Without examining these interpretations in detail, it may be briefly pointed out that for any mere man to have to be constantly affirming that he was a mere man would be completely unnecessary. If the phrase, Son of man, had been identifiable with any accepted title of the Messiah, or with any recognized symbolic figure of the Old Testament, it would not have been so obscure to His contemporaries, would not have served Christ's purpose to conceal His Messiahship, and would not have raised the questions that it did. To make the title mean *the* (i.e. typical) man is probably too modern in its conception, and too pompous to fit the consciousness of Jesus, yet it is somewhat nearer to the truth, and

also allows a reference to the Danielic figure as being fulfilled in Christ's purpose to establish a *humane* Kingdom of God; this, however, can be easier understood if we notice first, how in a less recognized way Christ made unique claims about His connection with humanity. His great parabolic picture of the Last Assize, when men will be tried according to the practical sympathy they have shown for needy, suffering, and penalized humanity, has often been quoted in recent times to prove that Jesus abolished the whole apparatus of theological tests, and proposed in its place a purely humanitarian criterion. But while this is true enough, it seems to be generally overlooked that Jesus not only declared that it would be the Son of man who, as Judge at the Last Assize, would propose these tests, but they were to be made so rigorously determinative of destiny because it was Himself who had been directly served or neglected by men's treatment of their fellows. Jesus is here claiming that He is so implicated in humanity that all that affects even the least and the lowest, whom He calls His brethren, directly touches Him. Now it is obvious that no merely human, individual person could ever make such a claim; it involves an integration with all mankind that can only be the attribute of a divine being immanent in humanity. When this is recognized the cause of His assuming the title Son of man, and the meaning it had for Him can be understood. His insist-

ence that He is the Son of man is obviously something that is constantly pressing upon the consciousness of Jesus, involving, therefore, that it is something for Him both remarkable and novel: He, who was conscious of having existed before and as more than man, now finds Himself born into this world, a man among men. But he calls Himself not a Son of man, but *the* Son of man, because He recognizes that His humanity is unique, and moreover that He is more than an individual: He is representative of humanity as such, and He is intimately related to all mankind. That this is immediate to, and forms an unquestioned part of the consciousness of Jesus is clear from many other of His sayings, but it is negatively and yet strikingly confirmed by the fact that Jesus, while referring to God as both His Father and ours, never Himself speaks of God as "our Father"; and, what is even more remarkable, He never uses the pronoun "our," "we," or "us" save on two or three occasions to describe a purely local, temporary or superficial grouping of Himself with others. Though feeling Himself so implicate with humanity in its suffering and need, He nevertheless stands high above both its sins and its aspirations.¹¹ Here is evidence of a usage which must go back to the habitual expression of Jesus,

¹¹ Compare how often a prophet, a preacher, or a moralist says "we" and "us" in his exhortation, his condemnation or his description of humanity.

for it is extremely unlikely that all such self-including references could have been kept out of the Gospels on any adopted theory, or by any agreed purpose of the Evangelists.

We are faced then with a person who has a unique consciousness of His humanity, which indicates, first, the possession of something additional to humanity, and secondly something universally immanent in humanity. Here we are obviously confronted with a psychological phenomenon which receives its only adequate explanation in the Church's theory that Christ was God incarnate in man. For, any historical being to have had such a consciousness can only have one of two alternative explanations: the one that it was simply true, and the other, that the person holding it was completely deluded. The latter alternative can be easily and entirely dismissed by the recognition that Jesus presents none of the characteristics of a deluded person. It would not be enough to claim that on many matters He is the sanest of all men; for of course, a person can be sane on every subject but one. It is, however, on the subject of His unique relation to God and His universal relation to man, where it is suspected that He was insane, that His claims are made, not only so naturally and modestly, but so indirectly, that they are not all at once visible even to the careful Gospel reader. In fact, Jesus is not only so reticent about them, but so

elusive on the subject, that it has been possible for hasty expositors to maintain, not only that Jesus never anywhere directly called Himself God, which is perfectly true, but nowhere left it to be inferred, which is manifestly untrue. It would have indeed been open to the suspicion of insanity, as well as utterly confusing, for Jesus Christ to have walked about this earth protesting at all times and on all occasions that He was God; what He did do was to reveal that He was uniquely related to God, as a Son to his Father; but even this relationship is only confessed in prayer or soliloquy, or has to be indirectly though inevitably inferred. There is in Christ's consciousness no sign of obsession, of anxious concern, of boastful parade. It is submitted therefore that the consciousness of Jesus, as it still confronts us, can only be adequately explained in the fully developed terminology of the Catholic faith concerning the personality of Him whom it confesses to be both God and man.

Probably the greatest hindrances to the modern mind accepting that Catholic faith are, not so much in its being authoritatively decided by the Church, and therefore a closed issue for any who would be counted truly Christian and be recognized as members of the Church, but more because of supposed philosophical objections to the possibility of such a doctrine being true, and, most of all, because the corollaries of this faith have not

been fully worked out, clearly presented or widely realized.

We cannot, as we have said before, attempt in this present work, a full exposition of the Catholic faith; it must be sufficient to have called attention to what is the Catholic faith concerning Jesus Christ; for that is the fundamentally distinctive doctrine of Christianity, from which all others flow, or by which they are regulated. But it does seem to be imperfectly understood, and even in quarters where this Catholic faith is held, what that doctrine involves for our humanity. For instance, it does not seem to have been widely realized that the relationship which Christ claims to His Father, He did not come into the world merely to make known to us, still less to proclaim as something for ever exclusive; but rather to invite humanity, through the union of moral love for Himself, which is to be our response to His union with our humanity, first of all, to be united each with the other, and, then, to be lifted to a corporate participation in the divine life. This is indeed expressed in the Baptismal formula by which, at our initiation into the Christian life, we are baptized *into* the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; which means nothing less than that we are adopted into the life of the Blessed Trinity, that is, into the whole being of God: not, of course, individually, but only in so far as we are united to the rest of redeemed humanity in the

Body of Christ; and, not, of course, by our own efforts, but through the assumption of our humanity by the eternal Son of God. This participation in the divine nature is wrought by faith in Christ; that is, an acceptance of what He is, what He stands for, and what He has done for us, confessed in our Creed, appropriated by mystical experience, expressed in sanctified character, and to be embodied in a redeemed social order. Christ is, therefore, not a mere revelation of theological facts concerning the existence of God, His nature, and the coherence in Him of a threefold personality; He is given to us not merely to be, in His divine and human natures, an adorable object of worship, but as a means of redemption by which humanity is to be lifted into union with God. The Catholic Christology, which the Church wrought out through such immense strife, and with such microscopic concern, was therefore motivated by a passion for accurate and absolute truth, and by the determination to secure an unshakable basis for a pure and rational religion; but also because upon it hung all our hopes for the redemption of the world and the exaltation of humanity. All those hopes which humanitarians profess to hold concerning the prospects and possibilities of mankind receive in Catholic Christology their only sanction, promise and guarantee of realization. Christianity is, rightly understood, humanitarianism in excelsis, and no other humanitarianism is

anything but derivative, or, otherwise, has a merely sentimental basis.

It needs to be pointed out in conclusion that this doctrine has not merely a personal, religious and socially redemptive value, but is of metaphysical and cosmic significance; it not only places the crown upon philosophy and science, but reveals their absolutely necessary basis, otherwise still to seek. We have made some endeavour to show that the search for truth implicitly, but inevitably involves Theism, and that the greatest of all confirmations of the accessibility of truth to man is to be found in the Incarnation. Jesus is recorded to have made a statement concerning Himself that, from the point of view of our approach to God, is even more essential, as it is actually wider, than any claim to be divine, namely, when He said: "I am the truth." If anything is lacking in the old definition of truth as the correspondence of mind with reality, it is that man, who is more than mind, if he is to remain as a whole, must have a reality which corresponds with him as a whole; that is, truth, if man while holding it is to remain man, must be more than a statement; it must be a personality. The truth which corresponds with reality, if it can be expressed in humanity at all, must be an expression of man's total personality. It implies also that God must be personal, or man cannot correspond with Him and remain personal; this is our only protection against the

delusion of pantheistic identity with God, and that absorption in Him which is preached as its way of salvation. *The truth*, that is the absolute truth concerning ultimate reality, can only be expressed through and in a person. Whether Christ is recognized to be that truth or not, the idea that only a person can be the truth is of the profoundest philosophical import. In order to be the absolute truth, therefore, that person must be divine, and the divine must be expressible in terms of human mentality. This involves the Incarnation, the two natures in Christ, and their union in His Divine person; if any such thing is to be dismissed as inconceivable, then it must be at length realized that truth must remain for us ever unattainable or unconfirmed. The philosophy, therefore, which turns to Jesus Christ as the crown and confirmation of its thought, which, when revealed, shows that the basis which the search for truth is bound to assume, is valid and is verified, is the only philosophy which will not be ultimately reduced, not only to confusion and agnosticism, but to the suicidal denying of its own premisses and processes.

The cosmic significance of Christ has an equally important reference to science, revealing what science cannot otherwise discover, namely, the ultimate goal of humanity; and, therefore, making personality, not only the outcome of evolution, which science has to assume, but the conscious purpose of existence. This is expressed

theologically in the declaration that all things are created in, through and unto Christ. This is not mere Scriptural rhetoric, nor only a pious theological opinion; it is a truth which science implicitly assumes, namely, that all things have as their preordained purpose the creation, by whatever processes, of personalities; for nothing else gives science a basis or sanction. But it reveals, what science cannot discover, but without it, is left with its discoveries incomplete, namely, that the goal of mankind is union with one another in Christ, and through Him to all the bliss of eternal life in God. If anyone has ever conceived, or there is conceivable, any other worthy, or adequate purpose for a universe of space so vast; of time so extended; of material machinery so ramifying, and yet governed by such simple laws; of humanity so multitudinous; and of life's experience so full of sorrow and joy, of disappointment and hope; then we have yet to hear of it. If this is not the purpose of existence, it is certain that humanity knows and conceives of no other purpose whatsoever. Science needs the philosophical basis which Christianity alone can give, if it is to pursue, with any hope or sense of reality, its inquiry into the actual workings of this vast machine, the gradual evolution of life and the building up of human personality. But it cannot of itself provide that philosophical basis, neither can it ever discover any other origin, or any other goal, than

that which Christianity reveals. This revelation need not be received merely on authority; but because ultimate reality is not attainable by science, and because no other goal gives any meaning or value to the inquiry science undertakes or the discoveries that it has made, this must be accepted as that which science infers and requires. Christianity and science cannot, when each is rightly understood, be at variance; whereas, without Christianity, science, as in the case of philosophy, will not only end in confusion and the denial of its own validity, but will inevitably become prostituted to procure the destruction of man's hopes, of his mentality, and indeed, even of that bodily existence which it is the peculiar task of science to strengthen and restore. The day is not far distant when it will be discovered that Christianity is necessary for the validation of philosophy, the sanction of science, and the economic redemption of mankind. To leave Christianity out is to leave out the keystone of the arch; everything, not only religion, but thought, human betterment, sanity will collapse. Therefore it is high time that Christianity was reconsidered; it can not only stand every critical test that can be brought against it; it is the critical test of all other things whatsoever.

VI

THE REHABILITATION OF THE CHURCH

How far there is a movement taking place in our generation which is tending ever farther from definite religious conviction, it is naturally difficult to estimate: indeed, it is not certain that, at present, the movement is not precisely in the opposite direction. We have seen reason to believe that there has recently been a decline in the attendance of public worship; and the evidence gathered from current literature, whether in newspapers or from books, would seem to show that there has been a great questioning of the very foundations of religious practice and belief; with the result that the convictions of many are weakened, a general confusion of ideas is widespread, and, for many, religion has become an irrelevant and indifferent matter. But much of this conclusion has to be drawn from statistics, which are not only doubtful, but in themselves do not seem to support at any rate the most pessimistic conclusions. No one's observation is really wide enough to gather what the general situation is; and there are even those who hold that, over against the general tendency,

which does seem to indicate a decline of religion all round and throughout the world, there are tendencies in the other direction registered in the conversion of individuals, sometimes of quite a startling and symptomatic kind, and in the existence of many earnest movements which may carry with them the promise of stemming the tide and of actually bringing about a recovery of religious conviction and even a general revival of religion among the people. There is, in truth, taking place, ebb and flow, lapse and recovery, loss and gain; and it is precisely these conditions, as we have seen, that describe the present crisis. We are in an indeterminate condition, and a movement of a more definite kind may take place in either direction.

There is, however, a widely prevailing attitude which is of considerable significance, namely, an inclination, in the modern attitude towards religion, to distinguish sharply, first, between Christ and Christianity, and, secondly, between Christianity and the Church.

In the movement away from religion, which has certainly taken place, however widespread or important it may or may not be, there have been certain positions clearly registered at which a halt is made. When men have abandoned the Church, it has not always meant that they have given up Christianity as a system of doctrine, or as a general philosophy of life. It is discontent with the Church that is at least given as an excuse why

so many have given up Church attendance and allowed their membership to lapse; but they either retain some loose attachment, by occasionally going to hear this or that preacher, or, if practically ceasing to attend Church, they may still maintain that they are Christians by conviction. This is not a position which is likely to be maintained through successive generations, and even for individuals a further retreat is often soon necessitated. Even then, another halt is often made at the position where Christianity, as an intellectual system identified with the theology embodied in the Creeds or taught in the Churches, is repudiated, but belief in Christ, at first, as in some vague sense divine, but, later on, as a purely human, but still revered teacher and even beloved person, is maintained. It is when this position proves to be unstable, and the further step is taken of questioning Christ's knowledge of the supernatural world, His general ethical outlook, or, even the integrity of His personality, that men arrive at a stage from which a retreat has to be made, because any considerable reflection shows that, otherwise a further step must be taken to a position intolerable to contemplate and inherently contradictory, namely, virtual atheism.

When, therefore, any general movement of recovery begins to be discernible, it is not surprising that these stages are gradually retraced, and a considerable halt is again made at this or that position which had also

been a halting-place on the outward journey. We have tried to show reasons why, if a real recovery is to be made, men cannot long remain content with a nebulous Christianity, which gives to Jesus an indeterminate, non-regulative and merely sentimental place; but that, at last, the Church's confession of Him must be faced, and must, if His own consciousness is to be taken as sane and valid, be accepted as substantially true. The moment this is done considerable pressure must be felt urging a return to the Church which formulated that faith with such precision and passion, which has maintained its profession despite so many temptations to compromise all down the ages, and which still, as a corporate entity, is distinguished because it holds before the world Christ as its only hope. But at this point a somewhat prolonged halt may be made; for a painful hesitation may set in, owing to the confused issues and the contradictory claims that now have to be faced.

The idea that there is an immense cleavage between Christ and the Church finds at this stage an expression which is sometimes based on uninformed criticism; which sometimes seems motivated by the welcome of any excuse for refusing allegiance to the Church; but which is sometimes either so bitterly indignant or mournfully disappointed, that it carries more weight and demands more notice. Work among young people, especially of student age, reveals what seems to be a sincere discon-

tent with the Church, because it appears to them that the Church does not represent the spirit of Christ and has fallen far beneath the level of His teaching; that it must be judged to have completely failed to give a Christian lead on matters like social reform, or the prevention of war; or that, in its general presentation of Christianity, whether in teaching or worship, it is not answering the questions or meeting the needs of the new generation.

It is not likely that this position, apparently taken up by so many, and not a little fostered by the criticisms of more or less distinguished persons actually connected with the Church, could be turned, as some might imagine, by a study of Church History. The controversies of the Conciliar period, the abuses of the pre-Reformation times, and the acrimonious debates, followed up by persecution, wherever that was possible, of post-Reformation times, would hardly correct the judgment of many people who pass damaging criticism upon the Church as it exists to-day. Nor would the tracing of the present anomalous condition of Christianity to the denominational divisions which have developed since the Reformation, carry much conviction; when so much in history seems to show that it was precisely when the Church was united that the most terrible abuses sprang up unchecked, ignorance, superstition and misery prevailed, and there was recourse to the sword to coerce the

heathen, as in the Crusades, or to fire to punish the heretic, as in the Inquisition, methods which are peculiarly abhorrent to, and are regarded as utterly un-Christ-like by the judgment of the present generation.

Some explanation, however, of this defection of the Church has to be undertaken, and it is variously ascribed by many to what is generally called sacerdotalism, that is, the control of the Church by a hierarchic caste concerned mainly with the exaltation and ministration of sacraments, and the laying down of exclusive rules for their validity. But since there are denominations which provide a Church order and worship in which these things are gradually reduced by the exclusion respectively of the papacy, episcopacy, priesthood and sacraments; the last named regarded by different bodies as merely symbolical, able to be dispensed with, or entirely mistaken, and therefore to be abandoned; objection on any one of these points need not shut anyone out completely from some form of Church fellowship. The claim, again, that dogmatic decisions and decrees, creeds and confessions, are a main contributory cause of the Church's failure to put first things first, to encourage free inquiry, and to adapt itself to the intellectual temper and social needs of the new age, is only another form of the same judgment. And since, again, denominations exist, which have in differing degree got

rid of these encumbrances, some form of Church allegiance is not hindered by these difficulties.

It seemed possible to take up a more radical position a generation ago, namely, that the whole Church idea was a mistake; that Christianity is a spirit, which can only be embodied to its loss or corruption. One may still hear the phrase "organized Christianity" or "organized religion" used, not only to express disappointment with Church activities as such, but as carrying with it a condemnation of such things as inherently bound to fail. The dogmatic assertion that the idea creates the institution, and the institution crushes the idea¹ as the statement of an inevitable principle is, however, no longer axiomatic to our generation; and this for a number of reasons. It has come to be recognized that the Church idea is embedded too deeply in the New Testament to be got rid of without destroying its integrity; it has to be admitted that, not only is the Church idea omnipresent in the New Testament and, indeed is the very cause of the New Testament existing, but the genius of Christianity is towards the creation of a compact fellowship. Then there is the practical consideration to be faced that without a definite body, such as the Church has become, it is difficult to believe that Christianity would have propagated itself, or have even maintained any existence whatsoever through the dark, dry and

¹ See Edward Caird's "Evolution of Religion," p. 248 (Vol. ii).

troubled periods of its history. Moreover, it would be remarkable if the deepening social consciousness of the age left religion alone unfertilized by its conceptions, and that there individualism were to find its last entrenchment. Finally, there is the contradiction inherent in the present situation, that the very things the Church is being blamed for not doing, namely, speaking with a clear and united voice on social and international issues, cannot be done without a united and, indeed, a highly organized body. It is therefore possible that a good deal of the modern criticism of the Church is no sign that our generation will be content to halt at a Churchless Christianity, but actually contains a hopeful promise that it will be compelled to move farther and accept the necessity of a Church; although, there again, it may for a while be held up by what it feels to be the disappointing and even perplexing divergence between the Church which claims to be Christ's, and the Christ which the Church proclaims.

The failure of the Church to produce in the general ethical level of individuals, or in the general impression made by the Church as a whole, anything equivalent to a corporate embodiment of the spirit of Christ, is not a matter which can be settled by discussing whether or not the judgment of failure is true and fair. Our age sees that divergence with disconcerting clearness, and the higher the claim made for the Church, the

more striking and perplexing that divergence appears to be. This consideration can only be prevented from becoming a permanent hindrance to the acceptance of the Church, if ecclesiastical authorities will first admit the fact. It will then be possible to draw attention, however, to the Church's fidelity to essential doctrine, and to the production of exemplary and reforming saints; which is all the more remarkable when so much else has been unfaithful and unworthy. It can also be pointed out that Christ Himself uttered a warning against the protective policy of weeding out the tares from among the wheat; that the Church can only grow gradually into the fullness of the stature of Christ, which is so immense and divine; and that while holiness can be already predicated of all who really constitute the mystical body of the Church, only eventually will the mystical body sanctify the visible organization, which will then be identical with itself; for while the prevention of apostasy and the avoidance of irrecoverable error can be supernaturally secured, advance in corporate holiness must await the more complete co-operation of men. While the ethical condition of the Church is, therefore, bound to cause a measure of disappointment and may sometimes occasion perplexity, it need not constitute a positive hindrance to the recognition of its divine necessity and constitution, which will yet be fully vindicated by its becoming "a glori-

ous church not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Similar considerations should eventually influence those of our generation who have hitherto rejected the divine establishment of the Church, because the Church has failed to enunciate the necessity of certain humanitarian, social or international reforms for which they are enthusiastic. For it must first be remembered that not every one is agreed how far such ideals are essentially involved in Christianity, or practicable until the world is converted. Secondly, it must be recognized that if any guidance to further implications of revealed truth is to come to the Church, it must come first through individuals; and the individuals to whom these ideals have come, if outside the visible Church, ought, perhaps, to be inside it, and may therefore be failing in their duty, and so depriving the Church of their superior illumination, which, if they were in their right place, might have more effect. Thirdly, it ought to be remembered that very often these idealisms are proclaimed not only outside the Church, but either in isolation from other ideals, with an unbalanced emphasis, or, actually as sufficient substitutes for faith. The truth needs to be boldly stated that, even if the Church had done nothing but announce to the world the fact of God, the eternal destiny of the soul as determined by our life here, and the need of Christ by every heart; and

had never advocated any social reforms, done anything to relieve physical distress, or concerned herself with the daily life of humanity, it would still have done for men the supreme service; for it is the insistence on the supernatural, the call to worship, the demand for faith which anchor the world to reality, fertilize the roots of humanity and keep open the door of hope.

When these considerations have compelled our generation to recognize the need of the Church, then another issue has to be faced, namely, the claims of Catholicism; and that for many remains a difficult issue which few seem able to decide without experiencing considerable hesitation, pain and sometimes despair.

On the one hand, they are confronted with the assertion of Protestantism that Catholicism, either in idea, or in embodiment, is a corruption of true Christianity. The purely Protestant position is, however, weakened by the fact that it has not only led to the creation of a great fissure between itself and the historical Church, but that it has proved to be a fissiparous and disruptive principle. On the other hand, the fact has to be reckoned with, that there is a steady movement by modern religious thought towards Catholicism. Whether it be due to the practical necessity of a united Church, the attraction of historic antiquity, or the appeal of sacramental worship, Catholicism is exerting an ever-growing influence and, in one form or another, is proving itself to

be more alive and inspiring, more worth fighting for and more satisfying to religious need. It might be held by some, and in considerable degree rightly, that man was only falling in love with ideal Catholicism. That ideal would have the strength of a Church one throughout the world, gather up the experience of the ages, and hand it on as an ever richer heritage to the new generations; a religion touching life at every point, meeting all the needs of humanity and finding room for every temperament and taste. But this is a mere ideal, simply a form of romanticism, and is often motivated by the desire to find an easier way than accepting facts as they are. Moreover, if the Catholic ideal is itself a true one, it has then to be decided how far it is realizable, or has been already realized. And immediately those issues are raised which are embodied in the problem that can be briefly summarized as "Rome and Reunion."

This problem must now be faced; but not so much to decide for ourselves or for others what ought to be done, as to try and discern which way things are moving, or may be expected to move; for that is our present task and our sole aim. On the basis of a purely ideal Catholicism there are three possible positions to be considered. There is the possibility that all the bodies which claim to be Churches are actually so, but represent different members of the same body; that despite their diversity, there is a sufficient unity; and that what appears to be

disunion is merely specialization that has not been sufficiently co-ordinated. It is sometimes put forward in defence of this interpretation of Catholicism, that if only each of the denominations would cease from condemning the others as inadequate, and would simply do its own specific work, and make its own peculiar witness, then they could easily be united in a loose kind of federation, which could then portion out to each its area geographically, as regards heathendom, or temperamentally, as regards Christendom, to which it could then, without further hindrance or distraction, direct its evangelistic efforts; while it would be possible for conferences gathered together for that purpose to define what was the Christian attitude on any subject demanding such consideration and calling out for such guidance. We need not stay to consider the possibilities of this proposal being carried through, for there are certain Christian Churches that protest that they could never join such a federation or identify such an ideal with Christ's purpose for His Church.

There stand out from this ill-defined, disunited and still even unfederated grouping, three more homogeneous bodies, who would refuse to join such a federation, because they each claim to be Catholic; ignoring smaller distinctions, they are the Anglican, the Greek and the Roman Communion, who rest their claim to be Catholic on the fact that they have retained the historic creeds,

sacraments and orders, which were never challenged until the Reformation. But of these bodies there is only one that, while claiming to be itself Catholic, admits the other two as also Catholic, namely, the Anglican; for the Greek regards the Anglican as inadequately Catholic, and the Roman as erroneous and usurping.

The Roman claims are sufficiently well known, and are naturally better set forth by those who have submitted to them; so that we shall not here attempt any exposition of them. But it is precisely these Roman claims which make the issue so acute for many modern minds who feel faced with the need of making a decision. On lines of historical descent and logical definition, on the very principle of authority, and on its general impressiveness of organization and extension, Rome makes a weighty and almost overwhelming appeal. And yet, on the other hand, it is precisely this Church which appears to modern judgment to have been so open to corruption, has been foremost in persecution, and so acquiescent in a low stage of knowledge and morality. The higher the claims are made, the more logical they appear to be, the more often they seem to be contradicted by the test of life. We may make every allowance for Rome's power to continue the manufacture of a quite recognizable type of sanctity, not elsewhere more than approximated to, and only then in so far as it is dependent upon the ascetic dis-

cipline or the mystical doctrine peculiarly preserved in the Roman Church. We can admit that in this communion there is an intellectual activity which, despite what might seem to be the somewhat cramping conditions imposed upon free decision, will bear comparison in type and in quality with the output of any other communion. It is right to recognize the fact that Rome attempts a task which other Christian organizations are inclined to evade, either on their theories of the purely spiritual nature of the Church, or by their more eclectic appeal. Yet it still remains a fact that, to an objective survey of the religious needs of the world, even when bearing in mind the necessity of a united Church, as well as for a Church which can claim to interpret authoritatively the revelation that has been committed to it, the Roman Church does not seem sufficiently different from other bodies, whether in piety, zeal or learning, to substantiate its claims to be the one, sole and all-inclusive Church of Christ, if this involves that all the rest are entirely outside, false, and mere pretenders.

Despite the difficulties of the issue, however, it is claimed that a quite significant and increasing number of people are being received into the Roman Church year by year. Although the number is certainly considerable,² and occasionally includes persons of some im-

² It is claimed to have now reached in Great Britain 12,000 converts a year.

portance, it is, of course, impossible really to appraise the motives which enable some to take this decisive step, even when they publish an account of their conversion. Some, no doubt, are persuaded by the sheer logic of the situation, and are driven to accept a good deal they do not actually like for the sake of what they feel to be essential; some are attracted by the authoritative teaching, or by the impressive worship; some are simply seeking the salvation of their souls, in pursuance of which this has seemed to them either a necessary step, or an additional safeguard; and some, no doubt, for reasons which have little to do with religion at all. The number of converts, however large, is probably more than outbalanced by the constant leakage away from the Roman Church; some merely giving up the practices of their religion, some falling away altogether from the faith, a probably insignificant number passing over into other communions. But the movement either way only represents a series of small cross-currents in a much more widespread and symptomatic movement towards a general return to the ideals of Catholicism. The desire to regain a greater sense of the supernatural in religion, of the divine presence in devotion, and of the sanctity which should attach to the very idea of the Church, has been influencing in varying degree all the Protestant Churches. This influence has been conspicuously and notoriously manifest in the Anglican

Church; there, within the space of a hundred years, it has entirely changed the thought and practice of large areas of Anglicanism, while the militancy of the Catholic party, and the menace which others believe it presents to pure or rational religion, have inserted into the Anglican Communion something of the same division and critical issue as was hitherto presented only by the antithesis of Romanism and the more definite Protestantism of the non-episcopal Churches. Whether a concentration of the issue within the borders of the Anglican Communion will lead there to some reconciliation, or will only end in another ecclesiastical disruption, time alone can decide. But meanwhile, though in a less outward manner, and, therefore, with less tendency towards a popular crisis, changes in the same direction are, in diminishing degree, making themselves felt among the Nonconformist or Free Churches. There is an effort to recover greater dignity in worship, expressing itself in more churchly buildings, experiments in liturgical prayer, and a more frequent and orderly celebration of the sacraments. The desire for a united Church is prompting negotiations for reunion, naturally, at first, between Churches nearer allied in doctrine and organization, some of which have been carried to a successful conclusion. Conferences embracing even wider differences have been organized, and although disappointing to the expectation of many in actual re-

sults, have had a marked influence on an outlook, which, despite apparently unsurmountable obstacles, refuses to be content with the existing divisions between Christian people, and envisages as the only end of its desires, and as the realization of its ideals, one Church, genuinely Catholic, united in faith and order throughout the whole world.

There still remain hesitating within this movement, first, those to whom the limit of any approximation to Catholicism is either a somewhat more Catholic, but still only a united Protestantism, which will eventually discredit and destroy Romanism; or a Catholicism of the historic type, but minus the Papacy. But there are a considerable and important number of people whose concern is less with the ecclesiastical and doctrinal issues involved, than for a Church which shall be able to voice, strengthen and include among its supreme concerns the modern ideals of international peace, social justice and the relief of human pain. It is a little difficult to discern how this movement, which seems to consist of such confused eddies and counter-currents, and which, as many believe, must eventually break against the insurmountable barrier of the Roman claims, is going to gather itself together and sweep onward until the Church of Christ becomes what it was meant to be, not only one, but Catholic; and that in the fullest sense, in that it shall take up and include all the past,

reconciling everything in a greater future, granting and guaranteeing generous room for all temperamental and cultural differences of type and race, and while, not merely sympathizing with, but actually creating all that is noblest in modern idealism, shall bring to it a sanction, inspiration and power of realization, which only humanity, at length knit into close communion with God, can ever secure.

What is often called the intransigence of Rome, the exclusiveness which seems to so many unwarranted, and only produces arrogance on the one side and hatred on the other, in so far as it is a matter of definitely decreed and infallible doctrine, obviously cannot be given up without serious consequences. For although some believe that the very profession of infallibility is philosophically contradictory, is unable to be sustained in the light of historical facts, and is the real cause of the whole confusion; if it could only be more widely recognized on both sides what the doctrine of infallibility involves, it might be realized that any surrender at this point would not only not help, but entail a surrender of the Church's commission. After all, the claim to infallibility is only a technical though somewhat startling way of claiming to teach the truth; not in such terms that it could not be possibly better expressed, but only as implying that the statement to which the Church has pledged its authority, rather than its con-

trary, is the truth. Thus the Church is always free to explain, to expound further, and to express more clearly what it has already stated; only it is not free to go back and revoke or contradict what has been decided upon as doctrine essential to faith. Surely every one can see that if any Church did such a thing it would involve positively fatal conclusions; for then there would be no assurance whatever that the Church of Christ would even continue a body identifiably the same, or might not re-write its doctrines, until it decreed that Christ was not divine, was not Head of the Church, and that there had been no real revelation at all. Even the doctrine that there can be and is only one Church, and that one of its marks must therefore be unity, is not a doctrine that at any moment, still less at the present time, it could be wished that the Roman Church would cease from affirming. It is quite arguable that the Roman Church, as a matter of fact, has never dogmatically defined this one Church to be coterminous with itself; and while its common claim to be the one true Church creates a painful issue, it does press upon all the other Churches, perhaps even more than upon Rome, even though in a confusing way, the necessity for unity. If some popular expositions of the Roman claims were to be taken literally, there would be for the Roman Church no problem of union at all, since, on that theory, the bodies outside her communion are no part of the Church at all, and therefore do not fall to be considered

any more seriously than the existence of religions like Mohammedanism or Buddhism; a position which it is almost impossible to maintain in charitable judgment or in prayer; for it seems to be implicitly overpassed by the prayers of the Roman Missal.³ When the day comes, as surely it must, that the Church shall be one, these claims of unity can be transferred to the whole body, and it will then be seen that they had been provisionally maintained in the interim, so that all might fall heir to their promise.

We are not therefore among those who demand any alteration in essential doctrine, or in the claims of the Church, as these have been defined by the Roman authorities. The claim of infallibility, and even to the degree that the Church, when speaking through its head acting as such, will be preserved from irrecoverable error, which is all that the decree of Papal Infallibility really involves, may come to be recognized as implied in Christ's promise to St. Peter, and may prove practically useful as a necessary guarantee, when the Church has to assure a frightened world, for instance, that persecution will never again be resorted to;⁴ for it is only an infallible decree that it is impossible to revoke. More-

³ Cf., for instance, the prayer in the Canon of the Mass: "that it may please thee to grant her peace, to protect, *unite*, and govern her throughout the world." The italicized word is *adunare* in the original.

⁴ The persecutions laid down in the old Canon Law to be applied to heretics have already been abrogated in the new codification.

over, it can be hoped that further explanations of Catholic doctrines in general, and even of those decreed by Rome, both after the Reformation and more recently, may be made in such a way that they will be more acceptable to the developing thought and the ever-advancing ideals of the modern mind.

It can be discerned that, implicit in the fully developed system of Roman doctrine, there are certain principles, which only need to be more definitely applied, clearly expounded and widely understood, to make an enormous difference to the whole ecclesiastical situation. One or two examples may suffice in order to show what is conceivably possible. In addition to those general humanitarian principles previously referred to as deducible from the doctrine of the Incarnation,⁵ one of the most important of these is the actual doctrine of the Church itself. While it is demanded that those who are convinced of the claims of the Church should submit themselves entirely to her authority, it needs to be clearly understood that it is Catholic doctrine that many outside the Church, and even outside Christianity, may be saved by the grace of contrition and the supernatural illumination of faith, even when they have no knowledge whatever of Christ and only a confused conception of God. In addition it needs to be more widely realized, and by Catholics themselves, that being a Catholic and

⁵ See Chap. VI, pp. 213, 214.

frequenting the sacraments does not guarantee anyone's salvation. Outside, as well as within, the organized visible Church there is the Mystical Church, of which the visible Church is only, though the necessary, sacrament; and it is that Mystical Church, and that alone, which is the heart of the visible Church and the real organ of salvation;⁶ while who are the members of that Church must remain unknown, save to God, until the Day of Judgment. If this doctrine were only widely promulgated, both inside and outside the Church, it would have the effect of bringing in many more who, at present, misunderstand the Church to teach that visible membership and the use of the sacraments are a guarantee of, and operate inevitably to secure salvation; while, on the other hand, it would immensely increase within the Church the earnest seeking of a more spiritual, personal and interior religion.

A second example of the explication of misunderstood doctrine may be taken from the place given to the Mother of Christ in the Roman Church. It seems to many that this only deserves the name of Mariolatry, which of course Roman Catholics would absolutely repudiate; for by the prominence given to her in popular devotion, the language employed in prayers, and the place and representation given in the Churches to pictures and images of the Virgin, an outsider, at any

⁶ See "The Church," Sertillanges, pp. 260, 261 (Eng. trans.).

rate, would infer that she had not only been deified, but that as far as accessibility, attraction and power were concerned, she eclipsed not only Christ, but the Blessed Trinity Itself. Leaving aside the somewhat hectic language of popular devotions, and the unsanctioned superstitions of the peasantry in some countries, it is really involved, and it can be rightly taught, that the exaltation of Mary means nothing more than the exaltation of humanity as such; that her position only just falls short of deification, but in exactly the same degree that the ultimate term of our salvation falls short of it; indeed, rightly understood, deification can be, and in theology is employed as the ultimate term of our salvation. Moreover, when some have seen, in the pictorial representations of our Lady seated beside our Lord on His Throne, an illegitimate apotheosis of one who was after all only a creature, they forget this is exactly the position promised by our Lord to all that overcome. Finally, whatever position is given to His mother, Jesus Himself declared that He regarded every one as His mother who did the will of God. Here then is that place given to redeemed humanity which the humanitarian really wants, and which only the deistical conception somewhat instinctive to Protestantism is concerned to deny to man.

If we can then look for further explanations on the one side, and can count upon the general movement to-

wards Catholicism carrying the Protestant Churches still farther on the other, it seems possible to hope, despite those who believe that the positions are essentially irreconcilable, for a reconciliation of Protestantism and Catholicism. This reconciliation would be hastened by the proclamation of what we would designate as liberating doctrines; that is, not new doctrines which deny something already infallibly decreed, but such a setting forth of the doctrines already held as to show that they are the real answer, sanction and safeguard of all that is true, right and noble in modern humanitarian idealism; ringing true, as they can be shown to do, to every spiritual test, and answering every spiritual need; not only satisfying man's God-given craving for accurate, certain and ultimate truth, but providing the very confirmation and explanation of that instinct within him.

There now remains to be considered a more practical question; namely, how the heterogeneous sects of Christianity can possibly be drawn into one organization. The idea that we must not try to organize Christianity is confused with the indisputable fact that we cannot limit the action of the Spirit of God. It is, however, Catholic doctrine that the Spirit of God does continually act outside, as well as inside, the visible Church and the sacraments. At the same time, to maintain that organization is essentially inimical to the action of God's Spirit, would exclude the possibility of the Holy

Spirit sanctifying that need for organization which only grows with civilization and the growing integration of the world. The Scriptures tell us that it is the actual work of the Spirit of God to build men into one body; and while the organization may not be identical with the organism, each needs the other. Therefore to try and envisage a gradual drawing together of the Christian bodies is entirely essential to our outlook, and, as a matter of fact, however slowly and erratically, it is actually taking place. But the desirable end of that process, when we consider not only the central control of the organization, but its adaptation to human needs, is not necessarily a close corporation working through legal directions and by a rigid mechanism, so much as a body bound together by the bonds of loyalty and love, and, while maintaining unity of aim, manifesting a considerable variety in function, and providing for a commissioned and co-ordinated attempt to reach men at the different positions at which they stand, and making for them straight and clear paths towards the centre.

The actual facts of the existing denominational situation surely reveal that, at the present moment, it would be a calamity, not only to Christianity as a whole, and to the Catholicism of the future, but to the Roman Church itself, if any of the great Protestant denominations at this moment closed down their activities. The

Roman Church draws most of its converts from these Churches rather than directly from the world, and if at this stage they simply ceased to exist, the Roman Church would find itself deprived of many of its actual means of contact with the outside world and the mass of mankind. For persons totally outside the Church, far from Christianity, or sunk in degradation, the Roman Church has little provision in evangelistic missions, instructional institutions, or forms of worship, to which it can introduce such people. If, therefore, the existing Protestant Churches could develop along the lines of their present tendency, and become societies, brotherhoods or orders within the one Church, for attacking the degraded, the unbelieving, the indifferent or the idealistic, and when they had done their best for them, would pass them on to be instructed in the complete doctrinal system of the Church, and to be prepared to take effective part in its supreme sacramental mysteries, we can conceive how a place could be found for such institutions as the Salvation Army or the Methodist Missions for reaching "the down and outs"; the Churches which concern themselves less with definite doctrines, such as the Congregationalists, or even the Unitarians, could specialize in presenting a reasoned apologetic for the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the ethical teaching of Christ; and any such bodies as the Society of Friends could exist to em-

phasize the social and pacific implications of Christianity, and to provide free forms of fellowship and silent forms of worship for those who could easiest begin with them.

The leaders and accredited teachers of all such bodies would, of course, accept the full Catholic faith and loyally seek to introduce those whom they influenced, whenever they were ready for them, to the higher doctrines and more specific forms of Christianity. The bodies which now generally call themselves Catholic could provide both the doctrinal instruction and the sacramental worship. The whole might be governed by a constitutional and benevolent papacy, now, however, no longer using the one-time methods of excommunication and persecution, but nevertheless, after due consultation with representatives and authorities, declaring what the Christian faith is and what practices are necessary to a full Christian life; but perhaps leaving any attempt to define, who did or who did not belong to the Church. The accredited rulers, teachers and workers would be registered and commissioned, but access to all the sacraments, would be left open to all others, rightly prepared, and who had sufficiently confessed their faith.

This would seem to provide a sufficiently coherent, responsible and continuous body at the centre, without any attempt to decide where the circumference was to

be described, which, at the same time, would constantly draw souls in from that circumference to full sacramental religion, calling in from the general body of those who frequented the sacraments, those who were marked out to be teachers, instructors, and the organizers of the Church, or the accredited propagandists and expositors of Christianity. No doubt, in a world such as ours, and with humanity in its present condition, there would still remain outside many individualistic persons, bodies of more or less irresponsible people, and even some still protesting sects, but they could be simply left to themselves, without formal condemnation, on the principle laid down by Christ in the Gospels: "He that is not against me is for me," and as a continuation of His ruling concerning the person who was casting out devils in His name: "Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me."

Along such lines it seems possible that the present movement towards a united Catholic Church will continue, be further facilitated and hastened, and, what is even more important, there seems to be some promise that along such lines the Church might recover that note which, to many an earnest and not merely critical outside observer, is still too little manifest, namely, it would be indisputably, dominantly and attractively holy. The endeavour to secure the holiness of the Church

by exclusion has only produced a pharisaical type; but, on the other hand, there has apparently been some process at work which has made the general level of membership under the Catholic system deplorably low; for, despite all that can be said for and against any such comparison, there does seem to be a higher average ethical level in Protestantism than in Catholicism. The lower ethical level of Catholicism is probably to be traced to an insufficient emphasis on the essentially spiritual nature of salvation, which must therefore reflect itself not only in doctrinal belief and devotional worship, but in disciplined character and in social justice. Protestantism, on the other hand, has even violently demanded these things: but, for the want of an adequate devotional and doctrinal system, has tended to produce only ethical complacency and an ineffectual social idealism.

Far too little seems to have been made in the Catholic Church of the necessity of applying dogmatic theology to social life, and of the possibility of the teachings of ascetic theology being appreciated by the common people. There seems to have been at work in the Catholic Church a too great trust in a policy of reserve in regard to doctrinal instruction, and too little trust in the ordinary man's capacity for holiness of life. There is a tendency discernible in nearly all the denominations, but especially among Catholics, to underestimate

the average understanding, and to talk down to congregations even where a fair level of general education prevails. This sometimes looks like contempt and is often felt to be an insult. The contrary mistake of talking above the heads of the people need not be the only alternative; though even where this has sometimes been fallen into, as, in the past, in Scottish Presbyterianism, it has perhaps only helped to raise the general standard of intelligence. A similar effect might follow the setting up of a high standard of spirituality, as demanded and attainable; there is no doubt which is the policy of the New Testament.

It may well be, as we have sufficiently insisted, that many of the humanitarian and secular idealisms of our time are insecurely based, and, because of that, are likely to degenerate into mere sentimentalisms; and that the attempt to realize them apart from religion will be in danger of having recourse to mere repression and coercion, and thus only end in failure and inevitably provoke reaction. But, in the more recent past, at any rate, the Church has insufficiently set forth to all men that high standard of personal character, social justice and international peace that may be expected to result from a sincere and whole-hearted adoption of the Christian faith, and is not even yet sufficiently proclaiming the hope of their realization, if only mankind, as a whole, will turn to God. If Christ's message at the outset of His

mission was "the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the Gospel," that should still more be the message of the Church to-day, since His Incarnation has been consummated in His Atonement. The recovered message of the Kingdom of God has been all too often interpreted, especially in Protestantism, merely as a just social order, proclaimed as if it was the antithesis of the Church, and its essential basis in personal religion ignored in order to identify it with humanitarian idealism; but all this need not have called forth, as it too often has done, especially in Catholicism, a pessimistic attitude about human betterment, a mere contempt for man's misguided idealisms, and a tendency to transfer God's Kingdom only to where His will is done in Heaven, instead of teaching men always to pray, and, therefore, to expect that even so it may be done on earth.

We are persuaded, however, that there is slowly taking place in men's minds a rehabilitation of the idea of the Church as absolutely necessary, not only to Christianity, but to humanity; that, moreover, the Catholic conception of the Church, a doctrine, and of worship, is also slowly being rehabilitated, as alone making the Church an institution to be taken seriously and capable of seriously affecting mankind. This rehabilitation of the Church in the respect and love of mankind would only be hastened if the Church would set itself more clearly and confidently to offer reasoned answers to the

inevitable questions of the human mind, to provide a worship which alone can satisfy the craving of our humanity to be brought into redeeming contact with God, and to inspire a service of mankind that would bring social redemption to the people and peace to all nations. It is therefore now more than ever demanded, as on the basis of Christ's promise and human desire it is open to believe, that a further and practical rehabilitation of the Church can now take place, so that it actually shall become the home and habitation of all those who are seeking personal sanctification, social redemption, and the salvation of our humanity from its sins and errors, its unnecessary sufferings and its debilitating divisions; since all these things have been done away by the Cross of Christ.

VII

THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION

WE ought now to be in a position to discern more accurately wherein the present crisis in religion consists and what may be done to arrest and divert it. But while there is no need for the present condition of religion to give occasion, even to the most anxiously concerned or deeply responsible, for anything approaching panic or alarm, neither does it seem possible to regard the present situation simply as a great opportunity which only needs to be seized to bring about a great revival of religion. There are too many inhibitions at work, intellectual, social and psychological to enable us to characterize the present state of human thought as offering a favourable opportunity for religious advance and manifestly waiting to welcome a forceful presentation of the Christian faith. Humanity's need for that faith, we believe, is permanent, growing, and at the present time, indeed, is peculiarly pressing; but humanity as a whole is not sufficiently aware of its need, and still less is it sufficiently persuaded that Christianity alone can supply it. There is too widespread an

impression that Christianity fails to answer the questions of the human mind, or, in the fact of scientific, historical and literary criticism can recover its position. Even where there is the all too rare intellectual conviction, or some more common, but all too vague intuition that Christianity is theoretically true, the present condition of the world, still bleeding from the wounds of the greatest war ever known, and faced with the menace of a still more devastating social upheaval, seems all too emphatically to show that Christianity, as a practical power, has failed; while meantime there comes from organized Christianity no clear guidance or rallying call, though faced with the present confusion and the clamant need of the world. Modern Psychology, which has discovered the activity of inhibitions, itself constitutes a considerable inhibition to the reconsideration of faith; and this because of the fear that it has awakened lest the mind should be seduced by phantasy and deceived by rationalization; to which two categories it would relegate what has hitherto been regarded as an indubitable experience of religion, or its valid intellectual defence. Before anything like a widespread and far-reaching religious revival can be expected, these inhibitions have to be overcome. If they are rightly described as inhibitions, then a great deal of repression must be taking place; and there is every reason to believe that the feverish recourse to recreation and the hectic

rush after pleasure, noticeable since the War, are due to a desire to escape from the pressure of problems too painful to consider, and apparently beyond human solution; and with that temper abroad there goes an unwillingness even to consider the great issues with which religion confronts the mind. At any moment something might happen which would forcibly break down this unnatural inhibition; and we have already considered as still possible events some even greater catastrophe than that of the World War. But since our experience of how men have reacted to that catastrophe, we have seen little reason to hope that anything tending to a deepening of religious faith would necessarily follow from any event of that character. There is also evidence that "the search for truth," which in pre-War times was felt to be a bounden duty laid upon all who had come to the conclusion that Christianity contained no certain revelation, is no longer an inspiring slogan. It was owing to that impulse that there sprang up in the last generation so many semi-religious cults and quasi-philosophical movements which boastfully proclaimed themselves as companies of seekers after truth, in contradistinction to Churches which claimed to possess a revelation, or to those who believed they had reached certainty. But what may be designated briefly as the Occult Movement, if it has not come to an end, is not exerting the same attraction, or, at any rate, is no longer

putting forth any new schemes, founding new societies or making fresh claims. Disillusionment, or at least weariness, has overtaken all these typical but temporary substitutes for religion.

There is probably something symptomatic of the deprivation and danger already affecting the human mind, consequent upon a wide abandonment of faith, registered in the numerous cases of nervous and mental breakdown, which have been so characteristic of recent years, as almost to amount to an epidemic, and which have accounted for the rise of psycho-analysis and the popular interest in pathological psychology. The recourse to psycho-analysis, save for the most serious cases, is probably a little on the wane; its methods have been too drastic and its results too doubtful for those who have submitted to it to recommend it with much enthusiasm to others. The confessed hostility to religion of some of its exponents, the adoption of a merely symbolic and ideological use of religious terminology by others, and the partial employment, by a few, of something approaching religious faith, prayer or the method of the confessional, raise issues that can only be settled one way or the other by a profounder facing of the religious problem.

It is possible that if only these psychological inhibitions of our generation could be overcome, one of the last conceivable obstacles to religious faith would be

swept away, and a great return to theoretical, personal and practical religion might then be looked for. Therefore, in order to take advantage of the present situation, there is need of a well-thought-out, co-ordinated and forceful effort on the part of those responsible for religious education and propaganda. Such an effort is, of course, only conceivable if those who regard themselves as religious authorities, or feel themselves in any way commissioned to carry Christianity to the world, could come to a measure of common understanding: but this would at least demand considerable agreement on all fundamental religious matters, a readiness to confer upon the need of the world, and a willingness for their efforts to be directed according to the need of specialization, the effective development of distinctive functions, and the planning of a world campaign. But this is only to state in more general terms the need for a Church, one in doctrine, order and authority; involving that true catholicizing of the Church which we have recognized to be a hopeful tendency of our times. We have tried to indicate how this tendency could be developed and brought to its goal. Something much more, however, would be required than the mere adoption by all the Protestant bodies of Catholic doctrine and discipline, and the acceptance by those Churches which claim to be Catholic of the claims of the Roman Papacy and their submission to Papal jurisdiction;

though, as we have tried to show, the functions that have been peculiarly developed in isolation might well find themselves not obliterated, but rather made more effectual by their emphasis being retained, while at the same time they were co-ordinated through the attainment of unity.

The Roman Church has in recent years not only retained but revived interest in apologetics, which almost all other bodies have unfortunately abandoned in obedience to the modern depreciation of intellectualism; and despite a good deal in Roman apologetics that appears to the ordinary reader as somewhat wooden, and fails to convince those philosophers who still bow to the dictation of Kant, it seems more than likely that what is known as Neo-Scholasticism only needs further adaptation by a closer and more sympathetic acquaintance with modern thought, to put into the hands of earnest and skilful persons an adequate defence of the Christian faith, and even provide the weapons for a successful attack on indifference, thus making way for a convinced, enthusiastic and widespread acceptance of the Christian faith.

Many of the Protestant bodies, notably the Methodists and their offshoots, have specialized in Evangelism, and these only need, on the one hand, a clearer psychological method, and on the other, a sounder doctrinal basis, to continue and to reconstitute themselves as

excellent agencies for reaching the indifferent masses. If these two appeals, apologetic and evangelistic, could be co-ordinated in order to face the world needs and modern mentality, an enormous and important advance might be registered, and could almost be guaranteed.

Two additional specialized functions would have to be further developed, more scientifically applied and sympathetically adapted to popular needs: namely, individual instruction and social application; and here again, the combined genius of Catholicism and Protestantism seems to be desirable. The prevailing confusion in religious opinion and social theory shows what a vast need there is for systematic instruction, a task so deplorably left unattempted by Protestant bodies, which seem positively to revel in vagueness, and have hitherto trusted far too much to rhetorical appeals. This task, although specifically undertaken, is only indifferently performed by the Catholic bodies, and this partly because they have been insufficiently trustful of the method of conference and the allowing of a place for free questioning and frank answering.¹

¹ The name "conference" is, of course, retained on the Continent, though to describe what are not really conferences so much as instructional sermons. Recently however, at any rate in this country, the Catholic Evidence Society has welcomed questions and answers, even with the chance audiences that can be gathered in the open air; which would surely be an even more effectual method with indoor audiences specially gathered to hear an exposition and defence of the Faith.

All the Churches which call themselves Catholic have given themselves to intensive individual instruction in the work of the Confessional. The advocacy of the Confessional has still to overcome the prejudice of Protestant suspicion and objection; though that can perhaps be easily done by the wider promulgation of what the rules of the Confessional are, with perhaps some additional safeguards of individual liberty really inherent in a right use of the Confessional, but especially if there were some further fertilization of the system, and a lubrication of the apparatus of Moral Theology, by the newly discovered psychological facts and the sanctification of some of the new psychological methods; the chief aim of the Confessional being to correct and develop the highest type of Christian character.

In the other direction, the Protestant bodies have lately shown themselves more alive to the need of applying Christian standards to our social and international affairs. For despite the advantage of the fact that the Roman Church can speak with a single and therefore authoritative voice on such issues, and while recognizing how much there has been of value in the pronouncements of the Popes on social order and international peace, the Roman Encyclicals fail to speak a language that is really intelligible beyond the borders of the Roman obedience, and seem far too much motivated by what is felt to be the necessity of condemning

such secular solutions as Socialism and that attitude to war which has come to be known as Pacifism. For while the doctrines condemned under these terms would be repudiated by many who call themselves either Socialists or Pacifists, insufficient attention is given to distinguishing what may be true in the conglomerate ideals these terms represent and the exact point where error is admitted or the truth is over-balanced by a false emphasis. The consequence is that idealists are thrown into a quite unnecessary opposition to the Church, which thus seems to them as a mere bulwark of convention and a barrier to progress.

Although considerable scorn is sometimes poured upon the confusion and futility of the conferences so much favoured and indulged in by Protestant bodies, they are, nevertheless, characterized by a genuine sympathy with the sufferings and woes of humanity, and by an earnest desire to discover the mind of Christ on our present disorders; and if only they were more adequately guided, as they would be inside the Catholic system, by concrete fundamental doctrines, they would probably furnish a better basis for authoritative pronouncements than anything at present existing on the Protestant or the Catholic side. There is a general impression, probably not far from the truth, which feels that in the Catholic pronouncements there is a use of old-fashioned weapons and a fear of opinions formu-

lated outside ecclesiastical guidance, which do not make for the deepest discernment, or for the employment of the best arguments. Something is needed, far more effective than the vague generalities and not entirely representative opinion of many Protestant pronouncements, and more appealing than the rigidly condemnatory and apparently arbitrary judgments of Papal Encyclicals.²

The mere outlining even in this brief and necessarily superficial fashion, of the present needs of the world and how they could be met, must, however, make it clear to any thoughtful student of the past or spiritual observer of the present that a Church perfectly united and with the most highly-trained exponents, all strictly co-ordinated and centrally controlled on a well-thought-out plan of world campaign, would still be in need of something more than unity and efficiency if it was to bring about any real worthy, beneficent or triumphant result. The unity of the Church in any sufficiently and spiritually effective inclusive sense has yet to be attained; and after, on the one hand, the abortive attempts of the World Conference on Faith and Order, and, on the other, the apparently wholly condemnatory attitude

² It is well known that Papal Encyclicals are not issued without considerable consultation of theological and other authorities, and it may be that they are not often composed by the Pope himself; but it would help to their reception and consideration by the world if this was made clearer.

of the recent Papal Encyclical on True Religious Unity;⁸ and when it is remembered that the rank and file of most Church members are either not concerned for the unity of the Church or are without any comprehension of the deepseated difficulties and long-entrenched divisions to be overcome; it must be evident that nothing but some great spiritual uprising, occasioned by a clearer conception of the world's need and of Christ's will for the unity of His Church, is essential before we can advance any farther in this direction. Far more necessary than improved machinery or more effective organization is the need for individuals aflame with earnestness for the conversion of souls and baptized with the Holy Spirit for that purpose. The present personnel of all the Churches, added together, or, weeded out by any necessary process, is neither large enough, nor sufficiently equipped for such a task, without some special endowment of the Spirit of God. At the present time the tendency is far too much towards officialism, professionalism and conventionality.

Further, if anything like an adequate World Movement is to take place, there must be a widespread and earnest seeking after, and a careful preparing for one of those special outpourings of the Spirit of God which are always necessary before mankind can be moved in the mass; for it must be remembered that many people

⁸ *Mortalium Animos*, 1928.

will never be touched until a mass movement takes place. It is not surprising that many Christians, though perhaps of somewhat narrow outlook and crude theology, place all their hopes for humanity in a revival of religion, and therefore believe that nothing can be done save wait, or, at most, pray for such a manifestation of spiritual power to take place. There have been in history many such movements, which have swept masses of the people into repentance and faith. It might be said that the Church was created by such movement, namely that of Pentecost; all down the Christian centuries we may see, in the attraction of Monasticism, and later in the Franciscan development, similar mass phenomena; the Evangelical revival was certainly such a movement, and, in Evangelical circles, ever since, such movements have come to be looked to and mainly relied upon to influence men in a religious direction.

Of recent years, however, such revivals have come to be suspect. This was due, in the first instance, to a gradual vulgarization, and to the commercialism that became more or less openly connected with them, which shocked or disgusted differently constituted people; but since then a further suspicion has been aroused by psychological criticism of conversion phenomena. It had long been suspected that, of the numbers who were swept into making confession of their conversion during a revival, only a small proportion remained faithful

to their profession, or advanced to an enlightened faith and a developed character; the following up of those who had registered their decision soon proved not only that a large proportion eventually lapsed, but that the lapses occurred almost immediately. Persons who had been persuaded when their feelings were worked up to indicate their desire for a changed life, or to testify that a spiritual change had already been wrought in them, soon proved to be without permanent consciousness of any such desire, and, a few weeks afterward, retained hardly a memory of what had so deeply moved them. The registration of alleged converts completely dispelled the delusion that vast numbers were really affected by these apparent mass movements. In addition, modern psychology has traced revival methods to pure suggestion, ineffective the moment its influence is withdrawn. Moreover, it had been observed that the excitation of emotion stirred other impulses than the religious; if the emotion subsided, it left the supposed convert depleted of energy, disillusioned, and therefore doubting the reality of what for the moment seemed so real, or the disturbed emotions found other expression, sometimes in sexual excess, and sometimes in insanity. Tested by the ecclesiastical valuation, apart from the fictitious promise of such movements, revivals have often only torn away from ordinary Church life and customary worship those who naturally came to look

for such movements as the test of spiritual life, or to desire an emotional state which the more ordered worship did not sanction or could not sustain. Many revival movements have only created further division, multiplied denominations specially devoted to revivalism, or fostered an unintelligent and destructive criticism of the Church.

Something has to be subtracted from this generally adverse criticism of revivals before the truth about them is reached; and we shall have to return to consider whether a true estimate and still rightful expectation of a revival of religion is not possible. For although suggestion may be wrongly employed to suggest what is false, some form of suggestion is equally necessary to awaken most natures to a realization of what is true. Spiritual truth is not discerned by the natural man until he is touched by some spiritually illuminating power. While after a revival many fall away, impermanently affected for the better, or perhaps permanently affected for the worse, it is beyond dispute that there have been a considerable number who under the influence of such movements were permanently rescued from an evil or fruitless life and became a valuable asset to religion; and it is more than likely that, without such a movement, they would never have been touched by what proved to be really redemptive power. It may be that the suddenness and dramatic change that have charac-

terized the conversions occurring under revival influences are to be explained, after the fashion of modern psychology, as due to long-repressed religious desires or impressions, at length gathering a momentum which one more impression causes to break forth in an upheaval which permanently alters conviction, outlook and disposition. The acceptance of this explanation in some religious quarters seems to have engendered the conclusion that conversion is an occurrence which it should be the duty of a proper religious education to render unnecessary. But this assumes that it is possible for education to be so perfect, and the response to it so complete, that no repression ever takes place, and no sin is fallen into that needs to be repented of. This only needs to be stated to be rejected by those who have any clear conception of the actual state of human nature or the demands of supernatural religion.

Further, while some revival movements and some revival-created characters have proved a disturbing influence to Church conventions, it is often a fact that those conventions have become a hindrance to a vigorous and adventurous life; and it was the stiff unadaptability of ecclesiastical institutions and the frigid atmosphere of Church worship, which, as much as impatient criticism and headstrong revolt, contributed to the schismatic, depleting and unbalanced effect of some revivals. The difference between the attitude of the old Catholic

Church to a movement like Franciscanism, and that of the Anglican Church to Wesleyanism, has often been commented upon, with appreciation of the sagacity of the former and condemnation for the blindness of the latter. Similar comparisons might be made, although they may at present win less agreement, between the capacity of the Roman Church to find room for new devotions, and the fear with which such things are regarded to-day in the Church of England.

It does look, however, as if there was little to be hoped from the usual type of revival, to which so many still pin their faith as the only thing that can bring our generation to religion. The type of revival which is still possible, would be highly effective, and is absolutely necessary, we shall presently consider; but that some touch of spiritual power is necessary, if the masses who are now swinging away from all religion are to be brought back, needs little arguing. The essential conditions that must be the prelude to any revival that is to have permanent and beneficial results are, however, at present wanting. Revivals are only possible when there is a certain modicum of religious truth still accepted by the mass of the people; and before any person can be an effectual agent for a revival, he must possess, among other things, a certain maximum of clear conviction. It is difficult to decide which of these two factors is at present more to seek. Considerable spade work

has to be done in restoring the rational foundations of faith, and no little in finding a sound psychological appeal, before we can expect to see any mass movement towards religion.

There is, however, a way to a true, effective and permanent revival of religion, which it is open to our generation to take. Indeed, this revival has been for a long time actually taking place, and, although it is not of a kind that is noised abroad, it has an indubitable registration, and is certain, at length, to have a remarkable result. We refer to the revival of mysticism. This is sufficiently signalized by the large number of books now being written on the subject, and by the ready sale that is found for the reprints of books long gone out of circulation, or for the publication of documents written centuries ago, but never hitherto printed. No doubt this revival has been accompanied by a great deal of confusion as to what is meant by mysticism; it has become in some quarters lamentably mixed up with occultism. Neither has the distinction always been preserved between systems which must be conceded to be genuinely mystical, but since they are derived from Oriental religions are generally infected with the delusions and dangers of pantheism, and the classical productions of Christian mysticism which have been created and guided by Catholic faith and practice. No doubt also, the desire to attain mystical experience has

been sought now, as at all times, by many whose motives are inadequate, and who are therefore easily tempted into exhibitionism, delusion and the other vagaries and perversions which generally disfigure and adumbrate all genuine spiritual movements. Nevertheless the literature put out shows signs of becoming steadily more scientifically critical, safeguarded by sane yet sanctified common sense, and predominantly Catholic in basis and outlook. It is in this latter tendency that there lies the main hope of this movement. In the first place, it is a simple empirical fact that the available mystical literature is overwhelmingly Catholic. The actual literary contributions, for instance, made by the Quakers, even allowing for their later origin, is, considering their emphasis on "the Inner Light," remarkably small.⁴ The contribution made by Oriental systems is neither so great in quantity as the Catholic material, nor is it nearly so good, even from the point of view of literary quality. Therefore even the widest inclusive study of Comparative Mysticism would almost of itself convince any serious student that the Catholic system draws from deeper sources of inspiration,⁵ and by its doctrinal and sacramental setting is safeguarded both

⁴ Cf. "New Studies in Mystical Religion," Rufus M. Jones.

⁵ Miss Evelyn Underhill's comprehensive and valuable "Mysticism" is, perhaps unintentionally, an essay in Comparative Mysticism; but when placed in that category it is relieved of certain slightly confusing tendencies.

from the bewildering incoherence and the destructive annihilationism into which the Oriental systems indisputably fall, as well as from the dangers of Quietism, which the Catholic instinct has been swift to detect and has had to repudiate. In the second place, the vast treasury of Catholic mystical literature is now being subjected to a rigorous criticism, classification and systematization, from which an agreed practical theory is likely to emerge.⁶ What is more important, however, for our present concern, is the growing recognition that, in this record of mystical experience, there is set out a well-defined and clearly mapped-out path to an interior communion with God, open to every soul that will follow the directions laid down and faithfully observe the conditions essential to progress. The supreme heights that may be reached, as well as the peculiar accompaniments or the special graces that may be gained, may be only for a select few, but all who are willing to strive with a purified and unselfish aim, and to follow with sufficient perseverance the disciplinary practices laid down by sound mystical theory, will at least find open to them an interior experience most satisfying, renovating and creative.

⁶ Two books of different value, as well as of somewhat opposed points of view may be consulted: "The Life of Union with God," by Canon Auguste Saudreau; "The Graces of Interior Prayer," by R. P. Poulain, S.J.: the latter a veritable storehouse, as well as a valuable classification of recorded mystical experience.

Here is the real cure for the confused mentality, the intellectual difficulties and the depleted spirituality of our times. Despite all that must remain unknown, and everything that may still prove not wholly satisfying in this present world, there is a way to interior peace, to unshakable conviction, and to a new endowment of power in the practice of prayer as that is defined and can be directed by mystical theory. That theory has, of course, to be defended against the suspicion that it is a way, on the one hand, of evading rational difficulties and of escaping from the actualities of life, and on the other, of encouraging delusions and so inviting new dangers to mental activity, and fresh deprivations of social life.⁷ Genuine mystical attainment never involves the suppression of the rational faculties. It is in mystical processes that the basis of rational thought is farthest analysed, the rational powers of the intellect are used to their utmost capacity, and only then, and with the entire assent of the reason, does the spirit pass to a region where reason can no longer follow. In the past, mysticism has had to clear itself of the suspicion of Quietism, a development which did more than anything else to discredit mysticism, and hindered its fur-

⁷ In the defence of mystical experience, three books may be referred to, as of value, and in the order of their thoroughness: (1) "Darkness or Light," Henry Browne, S.J.; (2) "Psychology and Mystical Experience," Howley; (3) "Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics," J. Maréchal, S.J.

ther progress for centuries; but this mistake is less likely to be repeated in our generation, because of the general demand for practical efficiency and social service. While there is no service man can render of greater value to his generation than the bringing of his own soul into close contact with God, and into entire assent to His will, any such alleged experience must submit to be tested by its practical effects on mental efficiency and moral character, and must prove itself, directly or indirectly, of indubitable social value. The antithesis forced between interior withdrawal in order to arrive at the contemplation of God, and exterior dedication to the redemptive service of humanity, is in process of being recognized as an unnatural divorce of things God has joined together; and it is gradually being realized that in their synthesis there is latent an immense power for a combined advance in personal and social development.

Nor does this application of mysticism concern only the training and development of character, consciously aimed at by those who are awakened to its primary need and supreme value. There is in the obviously wide appeal of mysticism an actual instrument to our hands by which souls may be awakened, who will no longer respond to the crude presentations of the penalties of hell or the rewards of heaven, which may have hitherto sufficed, but which are now only provocative of complete and disastrous misunderstanding. It is in mystical experience that there is in some, though in as almost in-

finitely varied degree, an anticipation of heaven, or, as the New Testament expresses it, a present possession of eternal life. Mystical experience actually brings heaven to the soul; and a widespread appreciation of what it contains would help to bring heaven on earth; providing as it does a spiritual enrichment which would regulate our inordinate cupidity for earthly treasure, give us a better taste for the real beauties of earth, and bring about that readjustment of valuations which must take place before we can rise to any worthy social order.

Combined with a sound psychology, enriched with all the new facts and right methods recently made available, mysticism contains the possibility of a redemptive application to the perverted types of personality which we find in the hopelessly slack, the viciously enslaved, or the mentally distressed. Mystical theology contains not only directions for making saints, but for converting sinners. The real cure for the fallen and the degraded is not elevation to mere respectability, but conversion to sanctity. "The greater the sinner the greater the saint" is a maxim which, if enunciating a potentiality rather than affirming an actual certainty, contains valuable truth. The violent sinner, the complex-ridden personality, or even the abnormally slothful, are often to be explained not by mere defect, but by the activity of strong instincts wrongly directed; to discern the good, of which they are the perversion, and to release their

entangled forces, is to discover new power then available for sanctity, genius and leadership; as the history of conversion sufficiently demonstrates. These applications of mysticism, however, need bringing out of the secluded, literary, and specialist realms where they have been hitherto confined, and made available through systematic knowledge and accessible channels.

There is therefore a unique opportunity and pressing demand for the Catholic Church to make it clear that the whole of its sacramental system has as its aim the introduction of the soul to that contact with God which is quite correctly described as mystical; and if, as a consequence, it could come to be widely recognized how necessary external sacraments are to the encouragement, as well as the sound development of experimental religion, we might find in mysticism itself one of the still open ways towards reconciliation and reunion. It is a fact, easily to be tested by observation, that the steady taking up of the way of prayer, with the clear aim of the sanctification of one's own soul, the salvation of others, and both for the glory of God, is soon bound to seek that fellowship in common worship, to have recourse to that self-examination, confession and spiritual direction, and, therefore, to approach those sacraments of Initiation, Restoration and Communion, which the full Catholic system alone sufficiently provides.

Very few of the saints have achieved their sanctity without some degree of mystical experience; no mystical effort is worthy of the name that is not motivated by the desire for sanctity. It is now being increasingly recognized that the saints have been the greatest servants of humanity. They have been the explorers and experimentalists, the inventors and innovators in the spiritual realm. It is through them that new movements have again and again been inaugurated which have purified, invigorated and extended the Church. Sooner or later it will have to be recognized that for the immense social needs of our generation, faced on the one side by the threat of chaos, and, on the other, calling for a constructive ability that at present is nowhere evident, we need the training, the dedication and the genius of the saint, as well as a high level of average individual sanctity. For the great ideals of social regeneration can never come to achievement without the intensive cultivation and extensive attainment of those virtues without which no society can be built; indeed, no higher type of social order will be brought into existence, or long maintained, unless the social virtues can be carried to a higher degree and produced on a wider scale than has ever previously been realized. And there is no real distinction between the social and the saintly virtues: they are identical.

Individual sanctity and social regeneration are, there-

fore, indisputably interdependent. There will be found in the growth of mystical experience, and nowhere else, that interior support which the mind of man shows every sign of needing, if it is to stand the strain of a more sensitively conscious personality, and the ever-increasing demands of external interest, labour and service, which civilization makes upon us all. Man simply cannot conquer the new worlds that are now open to him without an increase of spiritual strength. In the spheres both of social and international need, it is quite clear that we cannot get much farther along our present lines of conventional thinking, concern for safety and considerations of security. What is wrong with so much of our modern religion, Catholic and Protestant, is that it merely follows the conventions of the world, cannot imagine anything different, and is too tied to comfort and security to make sacrifice or undertake adventure. Surely Christ did not become incarnate and die upon the Cross merely to sanction the conventions that the world had already established!

Nothing can, however, be done for our generation until its overvaluation of externals is redressed by a discovery and higher estimate of the interior values which mystical experience can reveal. Only those who have appropriated, even if merely the more accessible treasures of prayer, can imagine the peace, the joy and the strength that is here laid up for all who will pay the

price. Some specially endowed and selected souls, who are known as ascetics and contemplatives, may be moved to make daring experiments to prove on how little exterior sustenance, comfort or security life can be lived, if only the interior treasure can be increased and supremely valued. These will always have their place in setting forth an heroic example for the world to consider, and a balancing emphasis that the world will always need. But it is along the line of a balance between the active and the contemplative life, in the practice of the ordinary ways of prayer, and the handing on of what is thereby attained in doing more effectively the ordinary work of the world, that is our greatest need and that there lies open the greatest possibility of advance.

Finally, the widespread adoption of the practice of interior prayer, seeking, not earthly good or merely individual satisfaction, but the complete dedication of the soul to the will of God, would provide that essential preparation of prayer, without which no revival of religion has ever taken place; but, this time, of a kind of prayer which would be a far truer and better preparation. For it is not, as some have hitherto supposed, merely concerted, quantitative and vociferous prayer that is of value and will prevail to bring about a revival, but the intensity and the extensiveness of individual interior dedication. For complete and entire dedication

will not only open within individual souls a channel through which the Spirit of God can flow and act, but the very opening of those secret doors in anyone's soul has a similar influence on the souls of others. It is because of the psychological fact of that influence that intercessory prayer is effective and contemplative prayer is so valuable.

With the widespread recourse to prayer of this kind, a revival of religion would then take place which would, first of all, open out almost illimitable possibilities for the restoration of the minds of men to peace, and that with salutary effect upon the healing of their bodies; not leading to the neglect of anything that medical science can do, and taking advantage of all that we are learning from psychotherapy, but providing an interior attitude of immense prophylactic and curative value. Secondly, it would bring the people back again to the sanative influences of worship and the restorative effects of the sacraments. Thirdly, when men gather once again to the one altar and partake of the same spiritual food, it will not be long before they will find an agreed advance towards a social order, setting forth, in its freedom of access to the productivity of nature, and in the equality of the distribution of the necessities of life, what the altar stands for in the Church. Unity of worship being thus attained, there would be found therein the basis of a guaranteed peace for all the nations

of the world, united, as they would be, in one faith, now realized to involve not only credal confession, but a social expression in which injustice would find no place, and an international blood-brotherhood which could never again take up the sword or stoop to learn the ways of war. This would be the coming of that kingdom which is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost: that kingdom for which we are bound to pray, and whose earthly realization, we are allowed to believe, may go so far as to unite all on earth in doing the will of God even as it is done in heaven. For the coming of that kingdom man must learn how to pray, as he has prayed so often and for so long, but now with greater sincerity, clearer faith and deeper understanding, even as he has been taught, and on the highest authority:

Our Father
which art in heaven;
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

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